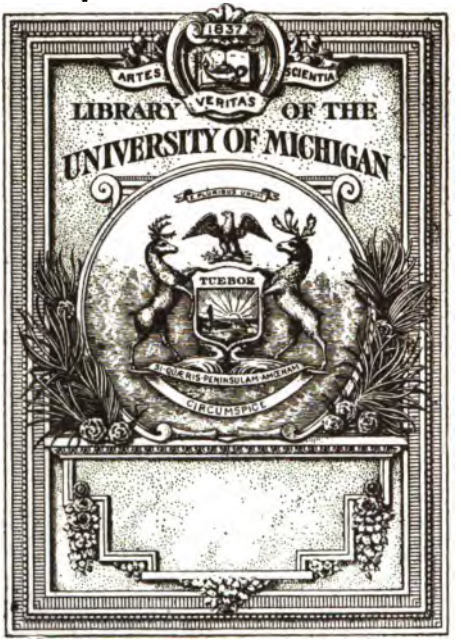

THE OLD INFANT

AND

SIMILAR STORIES

BY

WILL CARLETON

AUTHOR OF

"FARM BALLADS" "CITY LEGENDS" ETC.

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1896

By WILL CARLETON.

RHYMES OF OUR PLANET. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

FARM BALLADS.	CITY BALLADS.
FARM LEGENDS.	CITY LEGENDS.
FARM FESTIVALS.	CITY FESTIVALS.

Six Volumes, Square 8vo, Illustrated. Ornamental Cloth, $2 00; Gilt Edges, $2 50; Full Seal, $4 00.

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I

School District No. 5, town of Dover, county of Livingston, was brimful of snow to-day, and the little wooden temple of learning in its centre, crouching and trembling upon old, unreliable timbers, was surrounded by scores of drifts, as white as bleached muslin and colder than shrouds. The wind was never satisfied with them, and, using a diligence not learned from the school within, constantly added to or subtracted from their quantity. The young lady with classical face and large brown eyes who conducted this elementary university wondered where Paul was to-day, wished she were rich, thought of a thousand fairy stories she would make come true in

that inconceivable case, and asked little George W. Taylor to sacrifice another stick of wood to the interior of the stove.

"It's agoin' to be one o' these new-fashioned blizzards, Dad says," whispered the little boy, mysteriously, some fire from the open stove-door blazing harmlessly in his red hair. "He's a-comin' arter us, with the hosses an' sleigh, at four o'clock." And the pale-blue eyes shouted the words that the lips were refused, to the effect that a ride homeward toward supper, through the snow, was better than any amount of education. Miss Bertha Edwards reflected dolefully on the weeds in this young barbarian's pronunciation, and the wild look in his eyes, and wondered if they would ever be replaced by the straight hedge-rows of correct English and steady looks. She couldn't help recalling what good English Paul used.

"C'n I speak?" inconsistently spoke out a large, raw-boned girl, who meant by this to ask if she might whisper to some one near her.

"Yes, if it is necessary," wearily replied the young teacher.

The girl decided that it was necessary, and immediately began gossiping about the weather—wondering if it would break up a projected neighborhood dance—in a series of loud hisses.

"C'n I leave m' seat?" whined a small, portly boy, first snapping his dirty finger to procure recognition.

"If it is necessary," crisply replied the girl-teacher.

"C'n I get a drink?" inquired a thin, withered-looking lad.

"If you need it," answered the young lady, still more shortly. The withered young desert of a boy needed it, and began to irrigate himself slowly but thoroughly.

"Can I g' out?" chirped a small, cross-eyed child in the corner.

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the young girl, stamping her voice down with an emphasis that the scholars all understood perfectly, though it was accompanied with a smile. "The epidemic of wanting to do useless

things may as well be cured this minute. Scholars, let us throw ourselves into our studies!" (Miss Edwards used the first instead of the third person, because she was a student herself, and loved to lead her scholars rather than to drive them.)

There was a forward-march magnetism in this maiden teacher's manner sometimes, and her smile could resemble that of a row of bright steel blades. The scholars now swayed to their books with considerable interest; and the intellectual status of the school was certainly somewhat advanced during the next five minutes. The pale tempest without kept rising higher and higher.

"Teacher, ther's some one a-knockin' at the door," cooed a bright-eyed little girl at last from the midst of the study-hush; and in response to a courteous opening entered a few hundred snow-flakes and a strange, rough-looking old man of sixty, whose hair and beard were drifts in themselves. He looked at this youthful teacher with keen, utterly uncovered curiosity and surprise.

"Be you re'lly the school-mom?" he at length asked, in a half-dazed tone.

"I am the teacher of this school," replied Miss Edwards, with a gentle but rather compact dignity, which loomed gracefully up and cast something like the shadow of reproof. "Will you be seated, sir?"

The old man still stood by the large stove, resting a hairy, work-worn hand upon one of the desks near by. "An' you know the flumididdles that's in all these 'ere books, an' can l'arn 'em to other folks?"

The question, with all its crudeness, was so clean-mannered and respectfully put that the young lady smiled, almost cordially. Something seemed to compel her to like this uncouth veteran in the world's never-ending series of campaigns; at least, to approve of the real quality of thought and feeling that she felt was within him. The answering smile that his white beard and mustache had held in hiding crept out through a pair of sharp gray eyes.

"What I've come in for is just this 'ere," he resumed, in a low voice, though loud

enough for the curious children all to hear him. "When I was a little chap, o' the age o' these 'uns, it wa'n't fash'nable, you see, for poor folks' chil'ren to go to school. There was thirteen of us brought up, or sort o' yanked up, in one little log enclosure, with a leaky roof, four windows, an' a smokin' fireplace. When it come to gettin' on in life, we all had to jump out o' the wagon an' help push 'most as soon as we considered ourselves able to run alone. The nearest school was five miles through the woods. Two or three out of us managed to run over a few times, an' grab up enough alferbet to l'arn how to read; one on us kep' studyin' at home from that, an' got so full of eddication he couldn't hold much else — wa'n't worth a darn to do anything, where the directions hadn't been already printed down. He's independently poor now, an' runs a small but desirable insurance business. So fur as I was concerned, I missed my chance; I never even went arter the alferbet, an' didn't hev it brought to me; so here I am, workin' along torge the end o' life, an' liable to go into

the nex' world at any time, without any book l'arnin' to recommend me.

"You see, besides, school-mom, it ain't pleasant to feel that you went through yer pilgrimage, an' left that out; an' I want my eddication now, even though some'at late in the day. I'm agoin' to board at Shubal Turner's the rest of the winter, an' come to school, if you will let me. It's a queer an' sort o' unknown thing fur to do; but I can't see any other way. I want to begin at the foot-hills, work up the gulch a little at a time, an' gather all there is in it as fur as I go. I b'lieve you can put me over the ground, ef the right flash in anybody's eye is a sign of caperbility. An' now, what do yer say to an old man as wants to give his brains a chance to begin life over ag'in?"

Poor Bertha hardly knew what to say; she was acquainted with several proverbs that stood dead against him, and hardly liked to quote them aloud. There was that one about the twig being bent and the tree inclined; that one which says, "The boy is father to the man"; the German one which

declares that "What young John doesn't learn old John never does"; also two or three others, equally discouraging to elderly people with neglected educations wishing to be put through the hot-house process. She tried hard to keep her eyes from telling the old man these doubts.

"I know just what you're a-sayin' to yerself inside," urged the old man, unconsciously proceeding to meet proverb with proverb; "but you must remember 'Better late than never,' 'Perseverance can't al'ays be ke'p on the back seat,' an' 'There's sweet meat under woolly sheep-skins.' Besides, you see, school-mom, I never hed the sensation."

"The what?" inquired Miss Edwards, smiling more and more.

"The *sensation*, school-mom, of settin' in the school-house hour arter hour an' day arter day, an' lookin' at the other boys an' gals, an' seein' on 'em read an' write an' spell, an' wishin' Saturday would come, an' cuttin' up with 'em, an' bein' told to 'tend to my lessons, an' goin' out at recess, an' playin' with

the rest of the scholars, an' then 'Come, come away, the school-bell now is ringin',' an' a-doin' ginerally jest what I wish I could ha' done when I was a boy. I don't expect, school-mom, that I'll *l'arn* so awful very much, but I'd like to know how to string letters together enough to hold a newspaper right side up an' git a-hold of what new lies it's a-tellin' of. An' I'd be glad to find out, school-mom, how to write my name. But the biggest thing is, I want to be a school-boy—jest once in my life."

"How many people there are," thought the young teacher, "who would like to be school-boys *again;* but this poor old man just wants it *for once*—wants something he has no memory of—something that he has always yearned for." She pitied him, and determined to do everything possible in the matter.

The list of acquirements mentioned seemed at least within the boundaries of possibility; and the exceedingly old child was told to come next morning, and take his

first lessons in the course which he wished to begin so late in the earthly existence.

His delight bordered too nearly on pathos to provoke even a smile from the deep-hearted school-teacher: There were almost tears in her eyes when she bade him good-night, after dismissing the genuine children, and then saw the white-haired man and would-be youth wade off through the snow.

II

The next morning, amid starings from all the scholars, and hard-to-be-repressed titterings from the playful ones, the Old Infant, as he was immediately named by some of the more advanced young ladies, took a narrow, hard seat at one of the larger desks, and began his studies. They were not very extensive; consisting mainly at first in the investigating and contemplating of that grand substructure of nineteenth-century lore—the Roman alphabet. The examination sustained in order to determine the class

into which he should go was very brief. He freely and frankly admitted that Ignorance was incarnated and intensified in his person. "Of course, I don't know nothin' of any account," was the way he put it. "If anybody knowed everything, what would they want ter come to school fur? I'm agoin' to commence right down to the bed-rock, school-mom. I mean to stake out my claim to the alferbet this very mornin'. Sling out yer alferbet; produce yer a's, b's, d's, an' c's, an' look at me stick my brain-shovels inter 'em!"

The "slinging out of the alferbet" was upon the whole a rather trying task to the young lady. She found that this roughly crystallized old nature was not inclined to accept everything told him as irrefragably true, like the callow, super-impressible minds of those in their first infancy. The old gentleman's childishness proved to be of a metallic variety. For instance, he would look at her suspiciously when the names of the letters were announced, and ask her several times if that was true, now, an' if

there wasn't no under-claim on it. "You wouldn't gull an old man, would ye?" he would say, earnestly, laying his rough, hairy, weather-beaten, grizzly-bear-like paw upon her white, lady-shaped hand. "If this yer is 'b,'" he would exclaim, pointing to the capital letter of that denomination, and then referring to the small one of the same cognomen, "what is *this* little snide of a feller a-doin', a prospectin' under the same name, with one of its ears clipped off? Did this big feller you call B hev a son nat'ral or did he adopt him, or did it take his name without p'rmission?" He particularly hated the small letter 'g,' and evidently considered it a pure impostor. "Little, shrivelled-up thing!" he would say, leering at it through his steel-bowed spectacles. "Looks like a couple o' bad eggs with a wart on one of 'em!" The small "p" and "q" also concerned him. "What does 'p' git to be 'q' fur the minute it turns its nose the other way?" he would ask. And so on throughout the whole alphabet; he was constantly making criticisms that might have excited furious resentment in the

minds of the inventors and developers of the same.

These criticisms were funny at first, and caused Miss Edwards considerable solitary amusement; but they took time, and too much of the attention of the scholars, to make them finally desirable or even safe to be allowed. One day the old gentleman was particularly fastidious concerning the architecture of some printed character, and the teacher was obliged to tell him that he was there not to criticise the letters but to learn them.

"Right ag'in, teacher," he replied, just the least bit of a hurt look in his eyes. "I was agoin' outside o' my claim. Trounce me ef I don't do the right thing." And from that moment the permanency and inviolability of the Roman alphabet were re-established, and the Old Infant accepted every letter as if it were from the law of the Medes and Persians.

He began after a little time to read words, having first learned the letters; for John Russell Webb's invention of the Word Meth-

od had not at that time swept over the country. He was after a while able to participate in the mildly interesting fact that the cat would in all probability catch the rat; that a large boy had a small black coat; that the girl could eat the ripe pear with her sharp teeth; and in other matters of juvenile gossip, which, while received with gratitude, were rather disappointing, on the whole.

"Why can't ye put me onto somethin' about the old times in '49 an' arter," he used to say, "when we used to fight grizzlies an' snow-drifts an' famine an' aarthquakes an' robbers, an' almost everything else anybody could take a hankerin' ag'inst? Why can't we read some *grown-up* stuff, school-mom?"

It was hard to make him understand the impossibility of immediately scaling the heights of literature with the alpenstock of this newly acquired alphabet; but at last he reluctantly realized the situation, and consented to toil along slowly toward the far-off mountain-top.

The attitude of his fellow-pupils was at

first one of amusement, and in some cases of derision, toward this queer old man who had come among them so queerly; but as soon as the novelty wore off they settled down to a quiet, every-day contemplation of him. Besides, it came to be the fashion to like him. He was so patient with everybody, so loving, even; joined them so heartily and skilfully in all their games and romps; so fraternized with the boys, and was so fatherly toward the girls, that he was soon voted a hale old fellow well met in that quiet election which always takes place in every crowd concerning a new-comer. He gradually became renowned as a repairer of rough country toys; he could carry small children through the drifts, and snowball amiably with larger ones; he was useful, if not particularly ornamental, nearly everywhere, and finally became the most popular "boy" in school.

The Old Infant's delight at listening to the recitations was funny and pathetic. He soon joined the class in mental arithmetic, and gave the scholars a genuine surprise

with the fact that he could "reckon in his head" better than all of them put together when it came to dollars and cents; he remembered many of the places on the maps, and became a great "traveller by p'inter," as he called himself; but grammar he would have nothing of, and soon withdrew his attention entirely from the subject. "I can't see why you want to call one word by any longer name than another," he grumbled, good-naturedly. "What's the use o' standin' of 'em off into different companies, as if they wasn't all free an' equal, same as men ort to be? I don't see nohow but what I kin speak proper enough fur all practical purposes without no grammar in mine. I don't think, school-mom, I'll take that 'ere study up." And, feeling more mirth than her whole internal nature knew what to do with, the young teacher consented to let him pursue his studies on the elective system.

The Infant's first efforts in penmanship furnished the school with material for many thrilling tales of accident and adventure.

He smashed dozens of steel pens, in trying to get the right dynamics upon them, with a rapidity that would have caused thrifty Joseph Gillott to rub his hands in pleasure; while tracing the letters with the pen he made similar motions in the air with his tongue; he precipitated small freshets of ink in the vicinity of his desk, until the immediate environment was dressed in a full suit of mourning. He finally learned to write his name in quaint fragments, and a few other words; but it was evident that he was never to become an accomplished pen artist.

"Ye see, school-mom," he would say, at the conclusion of some particularly startling chirographic disaster, "I didn't git arter this ink-talkin' quite soon enough. It's a kind o' trade in itself; an' any one can't pick up so very many of them avercations in a life-time unless he begins mighty young."

During recess and noons the two had occasionally some very lively discussions on the value or worthlessness of education. To her surprise the young lady found that the old man, at one time and another, had gathered

up quite a good many arguments against systematic culture.

"Eddication gives yer nat'ral rascal a p'int, an edge, an' a handle," he said, one day. "It l'arns a forger how to write a name so's the man as owns it can't swear but what he done it himself; it helps a thief to sneak his way into society, an' steal 'em blind — as ef they wasn't blind enough already; it shows a liar how to twist words 'round an' cover himself all over with truth-skin; it makes good, honest, laborin' fellers feel all at once as ef their heads was too big to let 'em toil with their han's; it's taken many a hard-workin' chap an' made him so lazy he wasn't never fit for nothin' arterwards."

"You have forgotten the good that education has done," remonstrated Bertha. "You do not consider the sermons it has preached, the wounds it has healed, the discoveries it has made, the sick it has cured, the good it has done everywhere."

And then the old gentleman would sit back and look at her in perfect admiration.

"Yes, you kin block me out in a holy second, school-mom," he would say. "But arguin' in that sort o' way is a sand-blower that eddicated folks has invented to blind our eyes, an' make things seem different from what they really be. Still, *I* don't think that I shall ever git enough eddication to hurt *me*—an' you wouldn't be afraid of it either, if you was in my place, would ye, now, teacher?" And then the two would laugh a duet, like comrades of a lifetime.

But the Infant made considerable progress, of one kind and another; and he certainly learned one lesson that few of Miss Edwards's pupils missed, and that was to love his teacher. He asked her to stay and talk to him a few minutes one evening, not many weeks before the close of the term. He was not long in satisfying her curiosity as to the nature of the interview.

"School-mom," he said, looking toward a nail in the floor, modestly, but determinedly. "I ain't quite so young as you be, but I've got a consider'ble life in me yet. They ain't very many o' these young fellers in the

school that would like to take a back holt with me this evenin'. I'm good for quite a lot o' years, if nothin' happens too sudden, an' I believe I cud make you a good husban', if you'd jest take the trouble to say yes."

The poor old fellow had thrown himself on his knees, to Miss Edwards's half-pity, half-dismay. How could he so have misunderstood her kindness? How could he have the heart to take advantage of it? She had a mind to rush away without a word, and never speak to him again; but an accidental look into his good-natured, shrewdly simple old face, half amused and half placated her. To be diverted by one whom we at first dislike very often opens the door of our sympathies. It was so with this good-hearted girl. She took the man's old, withered, scarred-up hand in her white palm, and said, kindly: "You must excuse me; for I—I—am—engaged."

"But s'posin' you wasn't engaged," persisted the old man, with a little desperate twang to his words. "S'posin' you never

hadn't be'en in love with no one; would you hev hed me then?"

"Well, you know, our ages are too far apart," began the girl, withdrawing the hand suddenly.

"But s'posin' they hedn't been," persisted the old man. "S'posin', fur instance, I was as young as you be, or you wuz old, like me — do you think, school-mom, that in that case we'd hev been able to strike up a match?"

"I — I don't think our aims in life are sufficiently similar," faltered the poor girl. "Not near enough together to allow us to agree."

"Still, s'posin' that they *wuz*," persisted the old man; "s'posin' we wuz both in the same business—both right at it together—don't you think we could make a go of it then?"

"I—don't—don't—think—we ever could be congenial," stumbled the young lady. She would never desert her true-love, even hypothetically!

"But s'posin'—" began the old man.

"I tell you, I never would have married you on any account!" almost shouted the girl, rising, and stamping her foot on the clean school-room floor. "And if you ever say anything more to me about it I'll not speak to you again, and I'll—I'll—*turn you out of school!*"

To her surprise the old gentleman looked delighted. He rose from his knees and gazed at her admiringly.

"You're a nice, honest girl," he exclaimed, "an' I respect you more than ever. Ef you'd ha' tried to beat about the bush I shouldn't ha' held you half as high. But this is good, straightforward, thunder-an'-lightnin' talk, an' I honor it. An' you've give me another new sensation, school-mom — one that I've be'en wantin' ever since I got to be a man."

"A new sensation?" inquired the teacher, who was beginning to feel freer and safer with him again.

"The sensation of proposin' to a gal in reg'lar style, an' o' bein' accepted or rejected the same as any one, on my own merits," replied the old man, cheerfully and enthusias-

tically. "I'm refused, straight an' square, without any if's or an's about it; an' that's the second best thing to bein' accepted; an' it's consid'ble of a circumstance in the life of an old bachelor that never had the pluck to propose to a gal before. Now, I s'pose, the next thing in order is fur you to tell me that you'll be my sister, ain't it?"

"Your granddaughter, you mean," replied the girl, with the shadow of a touch of good-natured malice. She had not quite forgiven him for proposing to her.

"Granddaughter it is!" replied the old man, "an' if I don't make one of the best ancestors in your hull pedigree, then I'll go out o' the patriarch business entirely, an' I'm nothin' only a tenderfoot at it, either. You've been straightfo'ward an' kind to me, my girl —a newish sort o' kind—an' it ain't a part o' this old man's intention to forgit anything that's happened to him in the right shape."

He said this with as pompous an air as if he were the owner of sundry millions instead of a poor, half-ragged old creature, the terminus of whose life could not be far away.

It was not long before he demonstrated that he needed help rather than possessed the power of bestowing it. He was absent from school one—two—three days, and sent for the young teacher.

She found him in bed, in a dreary room at Shubal Turner's, and very sick, with what would nowadays be called the pneumonia.

"You wasn't agoin' to let the old man die all alone, not on no account, was you, now, school-mom?" he murmured, feebly. "You hev been the head boss of the best Home for Aged People I ever struck, little gal. Jest as if any one was tryin' to travel arter night overtook 'em, on a bad road through the mountains, an' he hed a great temptation to lay right down an' leave gittin' along to take keer of itself; then, you see, s'posin' he come to a pleasant little cottage, where there was a light, an' he crep' up an' peeked through the window, an' seed everythin' cozy an' comfortable, an' a blessed angel in there, a-comin' to the door to let him in, as if she was a-expectin' of him—"

"Now, that will do," interrupted the

young lady, laughing, and taking one of his hands in both hers; "or, rather, it *won't* do. You must not think too much about angels, especially in connection with me. I'm unmitigatedly human, am no seraph, and feel afraid sometimes that I never will be one."

"You're a hundred times as much of an angel as I be of a scholar," groaned the old man, and turned wearily toward the wall.

Then he seemed to doze for a little while, but soon awoke, pressed the white hands that still lay in his weak grasp, and said:

"How's things up to the school? Is the alferbet all right, yet? Does the Avery yo'ng uns hev as much trouble as ever a-doin' sums in their heads? An' how's Gerty Tompkins, the little gal that used to help me assay them long words? My! but that 'ere word 'thought' was an unmerciful hard one, school-mom, wasn't it? T—h—u—o—g—t—h— thought!" he said, in a tone as if his spelling were a perfect triumph of correctness.

"An' then there was 'through'—a good deal like the other; I couldn't hardly ever

tell them two words apart. T—h—r—u—o—g—h—through. I declare, school-mom, I picked up a lot while I was in your l'arnin' camp. By George! it seems sometimes as if my ol' head would bust a-tryin' fur to hold it all."

"You must go to sleep now," interrupted the young teacher, with tears in her voice.

"Yes, I know," replied the poor old man, meekly. "Ef I can. It's al'ays a tip-top good thing, ef any one kin sleep betwixt troubles."

He closed his eyes wearily, and was soon wandering among the many pasts that he had known, some of which existed a full generation before Miss Edwards's infancy.

"It's agoin' to be a cold day to-morrer," he muttered, almost under his breath, "an' there's hardly anythin' in the house to eat. I didn't know it or I'd ha' got home sooner. I've been to work hard all the week in Whitney's saw-mill, but I'm up to a night's hunt yet. Jest you see ef I don't lug home a deer in the mornin'. Don't you be a-scoldin' on him now, mother, fur puttin' of his time on

books. One caint sling their brains an' muscle at the same time.

"I 'spect you'll be the makin' of us all, brother, along o' your eddication! You jes' go ahead an' scoop it in, an' we'll stay by ye an' pay your expenses till ye kin stan' on yer feet. No. I'll wait back till you've got through; I don't believe in more'n one dippin' in at a time. We might git the fountains of l'arnin' kind o' muddy ef we riled 'em too much.

"Don't you cry, mammy—now I tell you things is agoin' to be brighter! You'll hear from me every week jest as sure as I kin arn the postage fur to send a letter, an' you're goin' to find somethin' in it more than I am well an' hope these few lines will find you in the same condition. There'll be some money in it — half of everything I 'arn is a-comin' to you, an' more too, ef you need it. An' it won't be many years afore I'll git home to ye—sort o' new-fashioned prodigal son, gold-dust jest a-oozin' out o' my

pockets—an' half on it fur you—an' all on it, ef you want it.

"Damn you, stan' back! Did you think you was goin' to rob him? He's sick an' down an' in trouble, but he's got one man that'll stan' by him till he gits well an' has strength to speak fur himself. Back, you dogs! I've got the drop on ye, an' I'll stir you up lively ef you try any of your dodges on me.

"Injuns! Injuns! Slide back here, Dan, they're a-comin'! we're good fur five o' the red devils apiece.

"Don't you go to thankin' nobody, madam, excep' God. Ef I've been able to do anything fur the childr'n, He put it into my heart — Him an' an angel that's keepin' school up in Dover township.

"No. The Lord ain't agoin' to let me die lonesome an' alone—He never wants anybody to do that. I've got a gran'daughter —an adopted gran'daughter—an' she'll take

my part. I ain't got any childr'n to wait fur when I git over the divide, but I shall keep a lookout fur that adopted gran'-daughter; she ain't the kind that forgits, an' she'll remember me all the way through the grave. She—"

She held her best pupil's hard and rugged hand until he was dead.

III

The next afternoon a plain, seedy-looking individual dressed in faded black called upon Miss Edwards. "I want to talk with you about my brother," he said. "He died yesterday. Have you any idea how much he was worth?"

Miss Edwards made no answer, not possessing any information concerning his finances.

"Something over half a million of dollars," continued the man in faded black, answering his own question. "He made it

in mining. He was one of the old gold-seekers of 1849. He knew how to take care of his monetary interests, and possessed, indubitably, his own *modus operandi* of enjoying them. I owe it to my deceased brother, madam, to say that he was always more than disposed to render me as much financial assistance as would be compatible with my capabilities. I am, I am happy to say, able to achieve a fair, though comparatively inconsiderable, stipend from the ah—the—ah—the—insurance business."

So this was the learned brother, who had captured all the erudition of the family, and was now "independently poor."

"He left," continued the man in faded black, "over half a million dollars, well invested and constantly increasing. And have you seen his will?"

"Certainly not," replied Miss Edwards, very quietly and distinctly. What had she to do with his will?

"Nor had anything communicated to you concerning it?" persisted the man of erudition.

"Nothing whatever," repeated the young lady. "I do not think any one in this neighborhood knew that he was worth a dollar, in—in money." A thought of the old man's real mental and moral value came to her mind, and two unshed tears hung their electric lights in her eyes.

"You are evidently a young lady of most unimpeachable integrity and indisputable depth of feeling," remarked the learned brother. "I am glad to make the following announcement: nine-tenths of all that property was left to you in his testamentary deposition."

A magnetic shock thrilled the young lady from head to toe. Nine-tenths of a half-million dollars! Oh, what a dream! what a great, grand, glorious thought! Jack could go to college now; Ethel could paint in Italy; the twins could be given a grand, thorough education from the start, and—and—Paul's parents need not reproach him any more for loving a girl that had the bad taste to be born poor. The dream, however, soon rushed away to join other and older ones.

"Of course I cannot accept it," she said, quietly but firmly.

"Of course you will, though," as quietly and firmly replied the other, with a startling descent to monosyllables.

Miss Edwards felt like ejaculating "Sir!" as girls do in English plays when gentlemen are impertinent to them; but she held her peace (meaning her tongue), and her temper with it.

"I am the only relative of deceased that has not as yet shuffled off this mortal coil," replied the learned man. "I have never contracted any matrimonial encumbrances, and have no use for the money; I could not manipulate it if possessed of it, and am perfectly competent to live well the remainder of my life on fifty thousand dollars. If you do not receive the property, it will revert to the State. You are young, and can, no doubt, do a great deal of good with it."

"But why should he leave it to me?" persisted the young lady.

"He mentions a number of motives in his testamentary deposition," replied the other, "all replete with assertions that are exceed-

ingly complimentary and creditable to you. His chief and most frequently reiterated reason appears to be that you were the sweetest woman he had ever found, who could at once be kind and dignified to him. He had led a rough, adventurous life in frontier towns and mining-camps, had seen very few women, had learned to hate them generally, and he used to say you redeemed the whole sex for him. You seem to have made the last winter of my brother's discontented life the most glorious summer he had ever found. You must take the money."

"But who wrote the will for him?" inquired the young lady.

"I am happy to say," replied the bachelor, somewhat proudly, "that I achieved that somewhat arduous task myself. And I may also add that I flatter myself it was very fairly done, and will hold."

"And you signed his name for him?"

"Oh no; not at all!" replied the other. "He could write his name very well—thanks to the instructions he had received during the past winter."

The young lady blushed. "Do you suppose I had any idea what he would do with his signature?" she exclaimed.

"Certainly not," replied the bachelor. "Kindly do not suppose, because I am a poor man, and a well-educated one at the same time, that I am a fool. He told me all about you. You are the first one who ever convinced him that education was a blessing. I had tried for years to do this, and I will admit that I was a poor sample of its effects.

"He went into your school first as an amusement; he remained to see what he had missed throughout his life. Yes, young lady, the money is justly and indubitably yours; and you must accept it."

And Miss Bertha firmly asserted that she would not, and then spent the whole night trying to decide whether she would.

THE VESTAL VIRGIN

THE VESTAL VIRGIN

I

"YES, my dear, my only son, it will be a sore trial to live without you," murmured Mrs. H. G. Wylkynse, while she softly groomed her son Chesterfield's hair with one jewelled hand and employed the other to gently draw toward her his unresisting form. "The four years that you are in college will be full—oh, so full!—of anxieties for me. But you are all ready now, and will enter in a few days."

"That ith, if I don't get plucked on the exthamination," interrupted "Chessie," as the fond little family called him. He spoke with a slight lisp, and parted his yellow hair in the middle. It is fairly probable that he could not help dividing his tresses in two

equal sections or lisping like a young girl any more than being sometimes called "Sissie." In fact, to use a figure, Nature had already called him by that sibilant name; she had constructed him after a semi-feminine pattern. A man cannot entirely resist the way he is made up or unmade down.

Chessie was not to blame very much for all his "she-ways," as playmates used to call them; could not help being called "Jane" and "Ellen" and "Kittie" and "The Vestal Virgin." He was, to a certain extent, as he was; and all education, refinement, and experience would simply result in different modifications of that one mental fact in his nature. It would almost seem at times as if we owed some forgotten, prenatal responsibility of our own as to the elemental constitution of our being; we are so rewarded and punished on account of it.

"I shall indeed miss you very much," repeated the fond mother: "I have had you with me so almost constantly, Chessie."

"But, mamma," replied the young man

(he had never got over calling her "mamma," as some hard, unfeeling young men might have done), "I shall see you occasionally during the time, and it will thoon path. Cheer up, mother; do not, oh, do not give way to thuch grief!"

While Mrs. Wylkynse was still conducting an elaborate struggle with her sorrow, the door-bell rang, and Barnes Dillingworthy not long afterwards came into the half sitting-room, half library in which mother and son were conversing. Barnes (called after the great Biblical commentator), or "Barnsie," as he was designated by his pet-namers, was the only bone of contention between Mrs. Wylkynse and her only son; in fact, he was several very sturdy bones of contention, being a reformed middle-weight champion "putter-to-sleep," as the boys called it.

He had been converted to religion, and induced to see the benefits of an upright life and a godly conversation, somewhat late in his youth; in fact, after his fifth successful engagement in the ring. He had found

himself austerely petted ever since by a wealthy uncle, who now determined to whittle a polished clergyman out of this gnarled and knotted tree, so happily transplanted from the forests of sin into the placidly blooming and well-trained garden of the Church. Barnsie was a sturdy, enthusiastic convert; was anxious to commence a regular theological prize-fight with the hosts of sin; and meant to prepare for a thorough college course as soon as possible.

But the readjustment of his natural faculties proceeded rather slowly. He had a bewilderingly large number of obstacles in his mental make-up, the removal of which was a very difficult and tedious process. Reader, if you are conscious of any natural traits which it is desirable to eradicate, begin as early as possible.

This young man had not commenced soon enough; and his difficulties were, in consequence, as he himself asserted, no feather-weights. For instance, he would even now dream during the night that he was once more in the praise-environed precincts of the ring.

He had often, in these unhallowed visions, risen in his strength and *robe de nuit*, rushed about the room, and scattered things here and there in a very lively manner — the items once demolished including pictures of several distinguished divines and a plaster cast of the Rev. John Knox.

He had, however, indulged also in tenderer dreams; he had fallen in love with Mrs. Wylkynse's only daughter, and developed a dense, inexorable, never-to-be-got-over-or-resisted determination to sometime marry her. He was so bashful, with all his physical strength, as never to have tried to win her personally; but his mind was evidently more or less engaged all the while in a mill, as he considered it, with the young lady's indifference. He was not an accomplished wooer, and seemed inclined to do the courting by proxy, or, rather, compel the young lady to so receive it. He was continually putting delicate little attentions, such as one would give a girl, upon the young man Chessie, whenever the object of his affection was near to see him do so,

or when he thought the brother would tell her of the same; but seldom spoke directly to her. Mrs. Wylkynse had an idea that this thoroughly objectionable young person was trying to court both her daughter and her son, and was jealous of him in each case.

"Halloo, Barnthie, give us your flipper!" exclaimed Chessie, with a kind of maiden-like heartiness, grasping the reformed one's hand. "I'm tho thorry you're not going to college with me, you know. But you'll come out and thee me once in a while, won't you now, Barnthie?"

The reconstructed young gladiator hoarsely whimpered an assent, glanced toward Miss Gladys, the daughter of the mansion, who was spinning with her needles a delicate spider-web of embroidery, and then picked up Chessie's handkerchief, which he had dropped, returning it to him with a bow and a voluminously caressing gesture. There was a slight change in the expression of the corner of Miss Gladys's eye. She knew that the miniature courtesy was

intended to reach her through the round-about medium of Chessie, and was rather enjoyably diverted by this novel method of receiving evidences of adoration. It must be owned, too, that she rather liked Barnsie, although really half-engaged to one Fitzherbert Netherwood.

"You know," she used to say to Chessie, as a profound secret, knowing that it would soon be told also to Barnsie as one—"you know very well that I could never marry one who had ever been guilty of maltreating his fellow-beings, no matter how reformed he might be, or even if he were a minister of the gospel. Supposing he should get angry on one of his 'blue Mondays'? Why, he might write his rage on the floor of the manse in letters of my own blood, and then use me for a blotting-pad any time! And then imagine how I would look at my next reception! I never could dare to marry one who had ever made it a specialty to cause people to appear any worse than they naturally do."

Then, after a few days, Chessie would tell

her of several quite hard cases that had been brought into the fold, and been very kind and exemplary husbands and fathers all their after-lives. She knew who had told him this, and always laughed softly in her daintily embroidered sleeve.

"Oh, Mr. Dillingworthy!" suddenly piped up Gladys this evening, in a couple of sentences sounding like a little crisp tune on a flute; "is it all so, about the examinations being awfully hard? And do you really think poor Chessie will have a close time to get in?"

If there was anything Mr. Dillingworthy believed, it was that all examinations were beastly hard; and he readily, though blushingly, answered in the affirmative.

"And do the students treat each other so — so — inconsiderately, and have little military engagements on the campus, and— fumigate new young men out of their rooms, and steal each other's class dinners, and—and—commit murder once in a while, almost? Fitzherbert Netherwood says they do."

"Naw, they dawn't, I dawn't believe," snarled Barnsie, with a thoroughly disgusted look. The mention of Fitzherbert Netherwood always affected him as the filing of a saw would a more sensitive person, although, singularly, he had never seen him.

Miss Gladys repressed an optical twinkle. "Well, I didn't more than about two-thirds believe it," the young lady rejoined, pensively adding another tiny strand to her spider-web. "But Fitzherbert is there, you know, and a Sophomore; and he seemed to think he was sure of it. Still, Sophomores are always exaggerating, I believe. I shall be *so* glad when Fitzherbert graduates."

Barnsie resented inwardly this manifestation of womanly interest in his rival, and almost wished he could stand up before him once, with or without boxing-gloves.

"You must be very careful, Chessie," broke in the mother, "with your new light lavender-colored suit. And don't let any of those terrible creatures get hold of your silk hat. Do not put on your patent-leather boots in cold weather without first warming

them; they might crack. Do not soil your neckties unduly, my dear son, and refrain from making any unmerited sentimental attachments."

"Yeth, mamma," replied Chessie, in a submissive and compliant tone. "I shall try to make mythelf worthy of you in every rethpect. Oh, mamma!"

He placed his hand in hers, and looked so gentle, so confiding, so altogether mild and lovely that no one could have helped being touched at the sight. Barnsie was touched. He moved a screen, to prevent certain more or less imaginary draughts from striking the young man who was so soon to leave his maternal protector.

"They gamble too, I have heard," remarked Miss Gladys, quietly resuming the conversation concerning students and ignoring the late affecting little scene.

Chessie looked horrified, and the mother more so. "Oh, Chessie, do not do that," she murmured, "whatever you do! It would keep you up late nights and spoil your complexion!"

"And have tri-weekly drunken-bouts," continued the terrible young lady. "And thrash their professors when they meet them in the dark. And—and—"

"Gladys, I *command* you, do not pack any more such dreadful things into poor Chessie's head!" exclaimed the mother. "Do you not see that he is already growing pale? Can you not realize that he will have a hard enough time, without your making it more so? The leaving home to go to college is a solemn, solemn thing for a young man."

"Oh, I don't think it's anything compared to boarding-school," declared the young lady, positively. "Do *you*, Barnsie?" looking him full in the face and spreading the spider-web all over her lap.

It was the first time she had ever called him "Barnsie," and the circumstance produced a powerful effect on the young man—at least from a chromatic point of view. His face became a plaque of fiery red, and he redoubled his attentions to Chessie.

II

The arrival at college did not seem so very formidable an affair at first. It was in the edge of the evening when a brakeman telescoped his head and neck into the railroad coach and yelled the name of the town. Chessie was alone; his mamma would have come with him, but her anxiety had made her slightly ill; and so Miss Gladys also had to stay home, though she would have liked nothing better than to chaperon Chessie on his trip. Mrs. Wylkynse objected to Barnsie's accompanying him, under any consideration or in any capacity whatever.

The university seemed arranged with a very fine view to the comfort of its student-guests; there was apparent none of the cold heartlessness which characterizes some institutions upon the arrival of a pre-Freshman. A polite, refined-looking man, with the legend "University" smiling from a small badge on the lapel of his coat, stepped up to Chessie, asked him if he was a student just

arrived, took him to a cab, and left him. Presently a learned-looking gentleman with white beard entered, and the vehicle moved away. "Are you about to become a student?" he inquired, genially, looking at the young man with a fatherly smile.

"Yeth, sir, that ith the underthanding," said Chessie.

"I am the secretary," rejoined the gentleman with the white whiskers, simply, "and we will go directly to the president's house, where you can have your examination in a little while, and be all ready for work in the morning. The ordeal is not hard, and you will feel better with it over."

Chessie would have preferred to take a night's rest before the ordeal; but the manner of this secretary was so kind and reassuring that he felt his plan to be the better. After a half-hour's drive they came to a large building, which looked rather imposing, although the young student could not see much of its exterior through the darkness.

But within everything was light and life. The peaceful intruder (for he modestly felt

himself such) was led into a little reception-room, where a cozy-looking table stood, strewn with various erudite books. Presently a smiling gentleman, whose youngish face and snow-white hair indicated hard thought and a placid disposition, entered the room and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"A part of my corps of professors," he said, simply, pointing to a number of clerical-looking persons circled around the room, and reclining in easy, not to say careless, positions. Chessie made them a profound bow, which they returned with more or less dignity and grace.

"Now, my young friend," continued the president, in a kind but business-like voice, "you are about to commence with us the great life-work of culture and of trained thought; to sink shafts with us in the hidden mines of knowledge; to sail with us the breezy and variegated oceans of the past; to aid us in contributing to the grandeurs of the future. Kindly attach your autograph, sir, to this paper."

Chessie did so, very kindly indeed. The amiable though dignified manner of this refined gentleman, so high in position, impressed him more deeply than he could tell, even to himself. "How much better," he thought, "than a haughty, self-sufficient, hard-hearted old file! I know I shall like him."

"Mr. Wylkynse," continued the president, looking over, through, and under his glasses at the young candidate for collegiate honors, "it will be necessary that I ask you a few plain questions at the outset, and that you answer them fully and frankly."

"Thertainly, thir," replied poor Chessie. "Protheed, pleathe."

"I suppose you are aware, Mr. Wylkynse," continued the president, "that Affection, more or less apparent, is the basis of everything desirable upon this earth. And now I inquire of you, sir, were you ever in love?"

"No, thir," replied poor Chessie, after a few seconds' hesitation. "Never thteady; never more than tho as to thigh when the name of

the object of my thenthibiliteth was mentioned."

"What?" shouted the whole company of professors in chorus, rising to their feet and fiercely surrounding the candidate. "At this age, and *in* this age, and never wildly, deeply, and irrevocably in love? No true student is he! Never will he be one! Away with him!"

"Do not be o'er-hard with the young man, my fellow-educators," interposed the president. "It may not be too late to repair the error. Do you consent, Mr. Wylkynse, to do your utmost in correcting this singular mistake? You are willing, sir, to fall in love, are you not?"

"Thertainly, thir, if it is nethethary in order to conform with the ruleth," replied Chessie, trembling. "I will do my betht, thir—my very betht."

"Professor of Mental and Moral Science, record his answer," exclaimed the president. "He will do his best. Be seated, my fellow-instructors. The young man is willing to do anything reasonable in this respect,

as, perchance, in others. I will now propound to you another question, which I call on you to answer in perfect sincerity and truth. Mind, sir, and do not evade. Are you a roisterer?"

"A what-thterer?" asked Chessie, in his haste and confusion.

"A roisterer, sir," repeated the president, in a tone whose kindness was just the least bit tempered with severity. "Can you roister? Tell me, and tell me truly."

"I don't think I ever did, thir," replied Chessie, his face a blank white leaf. "I do not exthactly underthand what that ith. But I am willing, thir, to try, thir, *tho* hard—"

"What!" shouted the professors, in chorus, rising as one man; "he has never roistered? Away with him!"

"Fellow-instructors, pray be not so precipitate!" interposed the president, blandly, but reproachfully. "By your impetuosity this night you may spoil a promising career upon its very threshold, as it were. Condemn him only for what he has or has not done. He is willing to roister — nay,

eager, I have no doubt, if he only knew the details of the process. Professor of Bibliology, record the answer.

"I now have another question to ask you, sir," continued the president. "Are you a reader of that great student's poet, Professor Longfellow?"

"My mamma taught me 'The Childrenth Hour,'" murmured Chessie, faltering, and feeling homesick.

"Professor of Rhetoric," exclaimed the president, "record the fact that his mamma taught him 'The Children's Hour.'"

Chessie noticed, as he glanced timidly about, that the instructors were all touched by this. They laid their heads down on their arms. Even the president looked suddenly serious, and smiled sadly. "Are you familiar with that beautiful line in the 'Psalm of Life,'" he asked, mildly, "'Learn to labor and to wait'?"

"I have heard it, thir," replied Chessie, hopefully.

"Do you accord with its teaching and its spirit?"

"I do, thir," asserted Chessie.

"You will now, my dear young friend, have an opportunity of demonstrating the fact," said the president. "Professor of Astronomy, bring the toga!"

The toga was brought. Chessie had heard something about this garment of the ancient Romans, but never had an idea that it so much resembled a modern waiter's apron. His coat was taken off, and the toga placed upon him. He was then conducted into an adjoining room, where there was a table covered with preparations for a feast. He was glad at this, being hungry; but there seemed no room for him after the president and professors were all seated. "You must labor and wait, my dear young friend," observed the president, smiling kindly. "Bring hither the soup."

Poor Chessie labored and waited for a matter of three-quarters of an hour. It was strange what a lively set of men these professors were when it came to eating. They kept him continually on the go; now at one side of the table and then at another; now

carrying this, then bringing that; he never had a moment's peace. He made several terrible blunders; smashed some of the dishes, spilled soup all over his toga, got his fingers in the pie, transferred some of it accidentally to his hair—in fact, had refreshments upon nearly every outward part of his anatomy, though not a morsel within. To his surprise, the president and professors never once rebuked him for his blunders; they seemed rather to be amused. "How kind and patient they are!" thought the young man.

At last the little scholastic banquet was over, and the young man was conducted again to the president's room.

"I will now proceed further with the examination," remarked the president. "Mr. Wylkynse, can you dance?"

"I think I have been danthing quite conthtantly during the patht theveral minuteth, thir," replied Chessie, rather spiritedly. This remark amused several of the professors, and they laughed heartily. "Good boy!" shouted one of them.

"I think that is true, Mr. Wylkynse," rejoined the president, cheerfully; "you have already shown that you can dance, after a fashion. But there is another department of physical education with which we never allow our students to dispense. Professor of Athletics, stand forth!"

The Professor of Athletics, a gentleman who looked as if he might be a very good boxer, put on a pair of gloves, and suavely invited Chessie to do the same. But the new student demurred.

"If you pleathe, thir," he protested, piteously, "would you be content to have the retht of the exthamination poththponed till to-morrow?"

The professors all laughed again, and the request was finally granted, but everybody except Chessie looked disappointed. "No more fun to-night," one of them muttered.

"We have one more new student this evening," remarked a professor. "He is with me now. One of the boys brought him in while you were at dinner, and he has been waiting for us. I think he is green

enough to be good eating. He wishes to be examined immediately."

"Good!" shouted the Faculty, in chorus. "Bring him right in!"

Chessie gave a start; he knew him. But the would-be student shook his head slightly and declined recognition. Chessie felt hurt, but submissive.

The ceremonies with this young man were much shorter than had been used with student Wylkynse.

"Let us examine him as to his physical structure, the first thing we do," proposed the Professor of Athletics. "You have no objection, have you?" he inquired, politely, handing him the gloves.

"Oh, certainly not, if you wish!" replied the new student, grimly. He put on the gloves very readily. Chessie was perfectly dumb with surprise.

"A physical foundation is the basis of all true education, my young friend," remarked the president. "Time!"

It was certainly "time," and the Professor of Athletics began in a minute or two to

wonder if it wasn't somewhere near eternity. The new student threw up his blow as if it were one of the play-strokes of a kitten, and then gave him a return one on the right side of the head, then one on the left, immediately afterwards one on the nose, then two somewhere among the ribs, and concluded with an honest, straightforward punch in the stomach that sent him speechless and windless against the wall. "Enough! enough!" exclaimed the president, rising.

"No, no, not half enough!" shouted the new student. "I ain't one-third examined yet. Do you want to cheat me out o' my examination? Say, you gray-haired soul, do you?" and he deserted the Professor of Athletics and gave the president a blow that displaced a wig and a set of white whiskers, both at once, and doubled him over his chair, displaying Fitzherbert Netherwood's flushed pale face.

"Oh, come on and examine me!" shouted Barnsie, for it was he. "I ain't anywhere near examined yet. Let the Professor of Rhetoric waltz to me, for instance. Bring on

your Anatomical Instructor, an' I'll give him some points."

"Run him down, boys, and hold him!" shouted the strongest of the group. Some of them made a rush toward the sturdy neophyte.

"Oh! are you all goin' to examine me at once, perfessors?" shouted the ex-prize-fighter, hastily flinging off the gloves. "Bare-handed, too? Good! Hurray!" And then he commenced on them with combined science and strength. He piled the first five he could reach on the floor neatly across each other; he then engaged in a grand amateur professor-hunt all over the room. Some of his quarry tried the door, which, however, was locked and the key in the new student's pocket. He chased the panic-stricken students about very much as he pleased. They rushed into the supper-room; he followed, pursued them all around the demolished banquet again and again, and mixed several of them up with the various dishes. Neck-ties, gravy, collars, cuffs, soup, wigs, Worcestershire sauce, false hair, and students were

all mingled together in a large and unclassified museum. At last the students found a blessed window, and, panic-stricken, sprang from it one by one—the muscular candidate giving each a hearty kick as he went out.

When the last one had disappeared, Barnsie came back into the president's room, feeling that he had for once employed his fists in a worthy cause and that he had had "a rum good time." "It's the first decent scrap, Chessie, that I've had since I was converted," he muttered, as the other flew to his arms. "Poor, dear Chessie! Did they startle you?"

"Thtartle me?" replied the Virgin, with wide-open eyes. "Thtartle ith no thort of name for it; why, it wath a conthant and bewildering theries of dithathterth."

"Well, Chessie, my dear, the disasters didn't all come on to you; that's one consolation," grumbled Barnsie, tenderly. "Disasters got pr'tty middlin' thick along toward the last of it; but none of the concluding series came your way. Here's a lit-

tle catastrophe, now, that we'll nip in the bud."

He was reading the paper that Chessie had signed. It was an order on the largest restaurant in the town for the banquet that had just been devoured by the self-constituted Faculty; the young man had signed it, supposing it, of course, to be something entirely different. The order had evidently been intended for presentation by the restaurant-keeper to "Chessie" after the feast had been digested. Evidently the bill for the repast would now have to be paid by the students who had really contracted for it.

The two young men went to a hotel, feeling that they were somewhat ahead in the night's adventure; while Chessie ate steadily for an hour. "How did you happen to come to my rethcue?" he asked.

"I happened to hear that you was goin' to have a racket," said Barnsie. "I arrived on a later train. I met a student, and asked him where any one went to get examined. He took me right to the place, and I sustained an examination they won't be

likely to forget for one while — eh, Chessie?"

III

The next morning, as they were taking a walk together, they met a young man with his arm in a sling and one eye that had evidently been carefully groomed to conceal artificial darkness.

He greeted them with a laugh, and shook hands.

"I'm the instructor in physical exercise," he said to Barnsie, "and would like to have you take me to your room, when I am a little better, and give me some points. That was a great lark last night, but you had the best end of the fun. Of course you'll run this so low that the Faculty won't pipe it. And anything we can do for this kid, or for you either, we're in for, and hold no malice."

"I'm coming next year," growled Barnsie, amiably. "Ain't fully up to it just yet; but I'll be all here when I arrive. Mean-

while I'll stay a few days and get Chessie started."

Before three days were gone he was on famous terms with all the "professors" of the eventful evening just described, and was giving them gruff sermons on the frivolity of their conduct and sage hints how most quickly to remove abrasions. Just before leaving for home he received a stylish letter, containing only a few words, but which to him was a whole dictionary of joy. They were as follows:

"You gave it to them well, especially to Fitzherbert Netherwood. I have read Chessie's account of your glorious fight in his behalf to mamma, and she has visibly softened in regard to you. She says, 'I am inclined to think there is something good in that young man, after all.'"

LOST—TWO YOUNG LADIES

LOST—TWO YOUNG LADIES

THE "Mazzini" was a small brigandish-looking hotel near the edge of a cliff at a certain Mediterranean town in Sicily. The furniture was rather too old to be comfortably reliable, and not sufficiently so to figure in a collection of antiques. The pictures were all out-of-doors—orange-trees in the front yard, blue sea-waves constantly in sight, and pyramidal world-famed Etna languidly smoking miles away. The table was a formality, looking as if it existed because such things were customary in hotels; and, in fact, one needed what Miss Jareds called "the true tourist spirit" in order to endure things there at all.

The landlord was a black-eyed, black-haired, bewilderingly handsome young fellow of twenty-two, the descendant of a long line

of bandits who had for several generations conducted campaigns against the peaceful tourist-race. They had robbed, killed, and kidnapped, and been hunted, shot, and hanged, for so many years that their youngsters had often grown up not knowing that there existed any other species of industry. When all the Italies were at last welded into one government, and iron-clad, honest-looking locomotives began to bring prosaic soldiers down there, who were expected to earn their wages by arresting or shooting bandits at sight, and did so with disgusting regularity, then it was that this young man decided to become honest and go into the hotel business.

Miss Jareds was stopping at the "Mazzini" over Sunday. She was as different from a Sicilian bandit as nature and art were able to arrange it. She was tall and rather angular, with pale-blue eyes and hair so red that one felt as if the frosts of age would never make any impression upon it without melting. Her general appearance was that of fairness and squareness, and she somehow

looked as if she had more rectitude to the ounce than all the foreigners in the world.

She was descended from a long line of New England people, in which one good family had followed another with the regularity and exactness of the letter-cogs in an improved typewriter. They had all been born, married, and entombed in the township of Middlewitch, Massachusetts; all belonged to the same church, and the majority had been preached to most of the time by some Jareds or other. This was the only one of all the stately tribe that had ever travelled into the wickeder countries, and she was upon business.

This one had with her a medium-sized valise, an ample shawl-strap, and fourteen young ladies. These last were as different from Miss Jareds as she was from the brigands, only in different ways. They were travelling students, so to speak. Some of them were alumnæ from boarding-schools, and were "doing" this European trip as a kind of post-graduate course. Others had been taking the tour as a medical prescrip-

tion, their parents quietly hoping that *mal de mer* would result in improved physical assimilation. One had been despatched for these foreign climes to enable her to throw the late family coachman into personal oblivion. Another was designed by her mamma as the Lucretia Davidson of the family, and was travelling in search of the inner material of a series of sonnets, the rhymes of which were already constructed, and, in couplets, triplets, and quadruplets, herded gracefully in her desk at home awaiting active service.

But all these young ladies were under the mental, moral, physical, spiritual, and universal guardianship of Miss Jareds, whose eyes were travelling gimlets, and whose executive ability was generally considered equal to at least the staff force of a regiment. She had been intrusted with this pretty cargo of perishable property through a general confidence in her which was as firm as the rock on which she now stood and looked off upon the broad and heaving bosom of the Ægean Sea.

The evening before had been a lively one at the "Mazzini." Our young descendant of brigands had exerted himself for the amusement of his guests, and had introduced peasants and villagers into the little parlor who could dance the tarantula—had even himself indulged in terpsichorean performances; and it required some self-control to enable the young ladies to sit in the parlor, a row of wall-flowers, and see all this going on without themselves cutting a caper or two. There was also present a young native improvisatore, with lovely black eyes and an old resonant guitar, who looked at the young ladies with languishing glances, and sang equivocal compliments in the dialect of his district, the landlord translating them to the company after each strain in a manner more politic than accurate.

The two varlets had understood each other very well; the improvisatore knew even a little more English than the landlord, and the two had enjoyed quite a bit of by-play at the touring party's expense, which they considered did not hurt their victims—the Italian

in the company being boarding-school Italian. Travellers are not supposed to know all that is said about them by the people among whom they journey; otherwise many of them would stay home, once they arrived there. The adroit flattery of the young law-obeying freebooter, although openly disapproved, really accomplished some effect, and the girls went to their comfortless rooms feeling that they had had too sweet-lovely a time for anything.

This morning, however, they had all yawned, moped a little, and some of them had admitted homesickness, and asked if it was settled whether they should sail for America next month on the Havre or Liverpool steamer. Part of them were writing or re-reading letters in their rooms, some were out for a short walk, and two had gone to attend service in the little parody-on-a-cathedral.

All at once it occurred to Miss Jareds, this fine Sunday morning, that her young ladies ought not to be walking around a wild-looking Sicilian town without any chaperon. She

soon found a part of them dreamily picking flowers on the ruins of a great rock-hewn Grecian theatre, and together they all went to the little church to find the remaining two; but service was just over, they were not there, and, it was soon ascertained, had not returned to the hotel.

To lose the location of any two or any one of her temporary step-daughters was a new and painfully startling experience to Miss Jareds. She had always made it a custom to carry them, when outside the range of vision, in her mind, as the blindfolded Paul Morphy did his chessmen, knowing where they were about as well as if she could see them; but here (or rather where?) were two of these, jumped clear off the board and temporarily unaccounted for in a primitive foreign town!

Was she losing her mind? Or by what mental lapse had she made this mistake? Some chaperons, she mused, would, in a like situation, have wept; some would have taken a vacation from active thought in a giddy whirl of hysterics. But Miss Jareds was not

constituted of emotions. She merely remembered the bravery of her great-grandfather, who, when the ammunition was gone at Bunker Hill, promptly turned his musket into a cudgel and still fought the foe. And she immediately made up her mind to have the two unlocated young ladies back under her roof before the sun set, or to declare war between Italy and the United States upon her own responsibility.

She called together those who still remained to her, and rendered them the following speech:

"Young ladies, two of our number have disappeared. How or where I do not know. Whether murdered for their jewels, captured and retained for their personal attractions, or imprisoned for ransom, I cannot say. We will let mere conjecture pass for the present. The young ladies are lost. They are also going to be found, animate or inanimate. Some of you have known different members of the Jareds family? You can inform the others if said family is in the habit of meaning what it says. I say that I shall search,

personally and otherwise, until I find these young ladies. I am in no danger of being murdered for my jewels, captured and retained for my personal attractions, or imprisoned for ransom. They all know as soon as they look at me that I am neither handsome nor wealthy. You will, during the next few hours, or until further directions, at least, all remain in your rooms. There is danger in the outside air, and I wish you to take as little of it as possible this afternoon. Disperse. Adieu!"

This concise speech, delivered in words as regularly sounded as the clicks of a ratchet on some windlass, was received in solemn silence by the fear-stricken young ladies. When they arrived in their shabby little apartments and looked out on Nature smiling at them through the window from green hill-tops and yellow orange-groves, they mused, scolded, or wept, according to their different dispositions. Most of them, however, fell back on dainty stationery, with monograms and extinct coats of arms at the top of each page, and commenced writing blood-stained

accounts of the affair to friends at home. Miss Jareds, having seen all her precious charges under the lock and key of her somewhat metallic tongue, took the brigandish young landlord as an interpreter and started away in a search for the authorities.

She decided that the first best thing to do would be to find somebody that corresponded to the mayor or something (there was no United States consul in the little village) and get him to set the entire constabulary force of the town at finding her girls. But nobody was home; the officials of the small town had got through mending the ways of their subjects and were employing the afternoon in breaking the Sabbath.

As Miss Jareds was disconsolately but still resolutely on her way back to the hotel, the young innkeeper promising, with altogether too many graceful gesticulations and uncalled-for remarks, that he would help her by every method possible, they met—what one might suppose the "duenna" would rather see at that moment than any other kind of a person in the world—a regular,

skilful, practised, shrewd, determined, successful American detective.

This man, however, Miss Jareds had met too often to make his appearance an unmixed pleasure, even at this solemn time. She had a romance in her life, as rose-vines will sometimes clamber into the dreariest of fields. This romance was a very unwelcome one, and, like the villain in the lyric, still pursued her. Its name was Billetts, and it had known her from when she was a fresh-cheeked young girl, at which time it loved her in vain; for the man was not of good descent, or of any possible descent indeed, having had an uncle and a grandfather hanged, and several other relatives whom the authorities would have been happy to accommodate in the same manner if the right to do so could have been exactly proven. It made not much difference that Billetts had always been a passably good citizen, and was trying to undo some of his forefathers' bad work by toiling industriously in the thief-catching business; the Jaredses all had an opinion that "murder

would out" some time, in family lines as well as elsewhere; and although William, or "Billy" Billetts, as he was generally called, was the only male human that had ever in any manner touched the spinster's heart, she was resolutely determined never, never to wed him.

But Billetts was as determined and persevering in social as in professional matters; he had laid the mental foundation of his life with view to the superstructure of a marriage with Bathsheba Jareds; and the rosy-cheeked, auburn-haired maiden could not be erased from his memory by the sponge of a little time or the wrinkles of a few years.

Notwithstanding all the above-mentioned truths, Miss Jareds was on the whole glad to-day to see Billy Billetts, detective, and she rushed to him entreatingly. "Oh, Mr. Billetts," groaned she; "I have been robbed of two young ladies! They were abducted and carried away for ransom, I am sure! And they will be put into a cave somewhere and have their ears cut off by inches and sent to

friends by mail a little at a time until large sums of money are paid! What will their parents say? I promised to keep them under my eye every blessed moment of the time, and here, in this remote corner of Sicily, this terrible, Heaven-forsaken country of Heaven-forsaken countries, I have lost them!"

William Billetts did not say anything at all for a minute or two. The exhibit of Miss Jareds excited on any subject whatever was so entirely novel that it at first of itself engrossed his attention. But the entertainment was not a very long one; she soon returned to her usual intense placidity.

"William Billetts, you must find those two girls for me before sunset!" she continued, calmly, in tones that did not vary from each other as much as so many teeth in a comb.

"Miss Jareds, you must remember that I am in the middle of a vacation," replied the detective. "A man can't work all the time, any more than a machine. Even a locomotive has to lay up once in a while, and let its fibres adjust. I'm travellin' for pleasure."

Miss Jareds knew very well what he was

travelling for, and let the knowledge take a peep through the window of her face. His sturdy, stolid, sleuth-hound nature was not able to let go the idea of winning her any more than it would that of the capture of a criminal. She had been aware, through most of the trip thus far, that he was shadowing her, and had sometimes felt almost like a criminal in consequence.

"Are you trying to make me believe, Mr. Billetts," she rejoined, with the same symmetrical tones as before, "that you, an American detective, will stand still and see two American young ladies abducted right before your very eyes, and carried off, Heaven knows where, and treated, Heaven knows how!—and you not raise a hand to help them?"

"Miss Jareds," replied the detective, heartlessly for one who pretended to have a heart, "these two American young ladies never happened to be placed in my keeping, and their fathers probably wouldn't speak to me on the street, in front of their own houses, if they happened to meet me there. The same

objection might apply to the young ladies themselves. And if these same fathers had any detective work to do, they would be just as apt to rush off and employ another agency as mine. So what obligations am *I* under to take up the case?"

"Then I will hire you to do it, you selfish man!" said Miss Jareds, lowering her tone till its repression almost produced the same effect as a shout. "What do you charge a day for your distinguished services?"

"An affirmative answer to the question I have asked you twelve different times—eight by letter and four in person," replied the detective. He consulted certain memoranda which he had on cards as he spoke.

Miss Jareds thought over the question for what seemed to her a long time, although it was scarcely a minute. Here was a man she could have married if his ancestors had been Jaredic, so to speak (or rather to think), if his present occupation were more congenial to her own, and if his syntax did not once in a while take a sudden twist in the wrong direction. There existed, certainly, a few

congenialities between them, and her uprightness of life gave her no fear of him on account of his occupation; of course, he never would need to use it upon her.

And, besides, supposing that to marry him was really to throw her life away, were there not two lives here in the balance—two more than lives—that had been put under her protection? So it was only a minute before she looked William Billetts in the eye and rejoined, "If you find these two young ladies before the setting of the sun, my answer to all those questions will be yes, and a Jareds will become a Billetts for the first time in history."

The detective immediately entered the agreement upon one of his cards, and said:

"Since we are to work together in life hereafter, or very soon hereafter, Miss Jareds, I will explain to you my methods. I jot them down as follows: Case, mysterious disappearance of two young ladies; names, ages, residences, temperaments, previous attachments (if any), appearance, and any general remarks that would be useful, please?"

Miss Jareds gave him his information in tones as rapid and uniform as the click of a telegraph-instrument.

"The next card," resumed Detective Billetts, "will contain my theory."

"What do you want of a theory?" ejaculated Miss Jareds. "What's the use of spending any time on theories? All you need to do is to go ahead and find the girls."

Mr. Billetts laughed compassionately. "You are not a natural detective, evidently," he said. "A detective never does anything till he has a theory."

"Well, then, for Heaven's sake, get through with your theory business and go to work and find the girls!" shouted Miss Jareds, in her half-whisper.

"My theory," continued Mr. Billetts, jotting down fragments of it as he spoke, "is as follows: these two girls fell in love, or at least was very much impressed or "mashed," as they call it just now in the States—"

"Do speak grammatically and leave out the slang — States or no States!" moaned Miss Jareds.

"With the black-eyed bandit that goes around pinching bad music out of an old-fashioned guitar," proceeded Mr. Billetts, with no apparent consciousness of having been interrupted. "He was around here all the morning, but hasn't been in sight for the last three hours. He met these two girls at or near the little church there, and has coaxed them off to see some rare curiosity or other."

Miss Jareds groaned. "Sight-seeing on Sunday!" she murmured, in her ghastliest voice.

"And the curiosity kept getting farther and farther away, and by-an'-by they come to one of these little stone huts, and the curiosity, you know, is in there, and in they go, and the two girls are prisoners."

"Take me to that hut immediately!" shouted Miss Jareds, in her intense whisper.

"I will—in theory," Mr. Billetts hastened to reply. "We haven't got there yet, but here is a fellow that can help us in it."

The fellow that could help them in it was a miniature milkman, so to speak, who

had brought his wares to town, as was the custom in that region, in the persons of a score or two of goats, which animals had the advantage of aiding him in showing purchasers that the milk was absolutely pure, and could on necessity even skip up and down stairways to be milked. He had gradually, in different parts of the village, despoiled all these little animals that morning of their lacteal treasures, selling the proceeds as he did so, and was now returning to his home in the hills.

"Halloo, colonel!" exclaimed Billetts, walking up to the swarthy merchant of fluid goods, and offering his hand. "Didn't I see you in New York, a spell ago?"

"New Yorka, onea — anno," replied the other. "I have there kept—a—pea-nuta—stand. Boys hitch it to wagona. Wagon go—it go—pea-nuts go. Boys eat pea-nuts. Bad country. Come home."

"Take a cigar," chuckled Billetts. "Take two of 'em. Stick one in your pocket. How's the milk business here?"

"Verra bad," replied the other. "Now I

will sell my goats if I could, and go back to America again."

"I'm a milkman myself," replied the detective, with a facility of romance that made color meet color at the very roots of Miss Jareds's hair. "I live among the hills in Connecticut. I'm agoin' to discharge my cows and try the goat plan. S'posin' I buy your little animals of you at a reasonable price and take you over as my head man."

The Sicilian goatherd was very willing, and named reasonable figures, although they sounded rather high in Italian money. But within five minutes Mr. Billetts had bought the entire plant, engaged his overseer, and paid five francs down to bind the bargain. Miss Jareds looked on in an intense and new kind of wonder, born of her own honesty and sincerity. "How will he ever get the animals there or manage them when he does?" she pondered. "Why not buy American goats? Why not gather them up in the outskirts of New Haven, Hartford, and Boston? Why—"

"But there's one thing bothers me a little," continued Miss Jareds's prospective husband. "I've no musician."

"To sell our milk by musica?" inquired the Sicilian, wonderingly.

"Oh yes," replied our theorist, placidly, "we always sell milk by music in Connecticut. They think it sweetens the cream, you see. Our customers wouldn't buy unless we had a fellow with a guitar going along with us—a fellow that could play and sing."

"My cousin, Giuseppe Polyphemus—he could do that!" interrupted the other, gleefully. "He that did sing last nighta."

"Giuseppe Polyphemus," repeated the amateur milkman, writing the name down on one of his cards as accurately as he could. "But we must see him now—we must find him quick."

"Come with me up the hill. I go past that house in where he and his mother do live!" said the delighted ex-pea-nut vender. "You had better not go," whispered Billetts to Miss Jareds as the little procession of men and animals moved for the hills.

"But indeed I shall," replied Miss Jareds, calmly. "I shall go every step of the way, and never stop going until those two girls are found. The young ladies at the house are safe so long as they stay in their rooms, and that they will probably do. So let's walk along, and immediately."

The detective saw that there was a very respectable article of will here, and submitted, although with reluctance.

"This is the lady I am to marry," he explained to the prospective overseer, while Miss Jareds blushed furiously. "She wants to see the guitar-tickler before we engage him."

They toiled onward and up a hill, where the tyrant Dionysus had once led a savage army of Syracusans in the middle of a winter's night. But Miss Jareds cared nothing just then for history. She kept her mind on those two girls, and would have walked all the way, by mere force of will, and been sick for a week after; but a boy and donkey, whom they met upon the road, were hired to give her a lift.

"It is a-here my cousin Giuseppe does live,"

exclaimed the goatherd, stopping before what might be called a stone cottage. "Go you in and see him. I will comea back so soon I do care for my goats."

They knocked, and were met at the door by an old Sicilian woman with gray hair, gray brows, and eyes as black as any sloe that Europe ever raised. The little room contained the rudest kind of furniture, which, however, did not include a guitar or Giuseppe. Amid the rude and characteristic things were some incongruous ones, showing that the world has at last grown very small indeed. Among these were a Yankee dollar-clock from Massachusetts and a can of kerosene-oil, in one corner, from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Travellers often find these little property-disappointments in obscure, far-away places nowadays.

But the detective saw still more. As near the wall as he could get, and peering out of the window, with face turned from the newcomers, was an old man. There was something in his attitude and lack of gesture that convinced the detective that this party was

an American, but did not wish to be known as such. He walked close to the stranger, and touched him jauntily on the shoulder.

("Without an introduction!" moaned Miss Jareds, in her mind. "How informal the Billettses always are!")

"Why, halloo, my fellow-countryman!" exclaimed the detective, now convinced that he was right. "I've met you before, I'm sure!"

"You are mistaken, sir," replied the old gentleman, coldly, rising to his full height and standing somehow as if there were a partition and a window between them. "I am not an American. I am an Englishman, who has decided to spend the remainder of his life in these regions, where the people, though simple and rude, appreciate worth—"

"And also the extra money you brought with you from the bank the night you resigned as cashier," interrupted Billetts, looking on a card which he took from some concealed pocket. "When did you come out of

the interior of the country; and how soon do you expect to go back? Wanted—a defaulter from Baltimore, Maryland—"

The old gentleman shrank back from the imaginary partition and window, crouching down as if he would hide forever from the look of man. "For Heaven's sake, sir, if you have been pursuing me," he moaned, "give up the idea and return without me! I am a poor old man, without one friend in the world, except these simple people, whom I have treated justly, and who love me, with all my faults and theirs. I was honest for a good many years—nobody more so. I handled millions upon millions of dollars before I ever thought of stealing a cent. But somehow my stock of probity must have gradually become used up, and all at once I found that I had stolen—when I did not know! There was a deficit of a hundred thousand dollars; nobody could have been to blame but me—and—I fled—fled in a kind of panic and daze, both together. But, before Heaven, I have none of the money with me! I cannot be dragged back into the courts and the

jails! All my family and my old acquaintances think I am dead, and I must not be resurrected into an ignominious life! It would more than kill me, sir—much more than kill me!"

The detective, having seen Miss Jareds seated, took for his own use another primitive chair, and contemplated the old gentleman with a stony but cheerful calmness. The maiden lady, who felt that afternoon shadows were every moment growing longer as traces of her young ladies grew slighter, repressed with difficulty a half-hysterical desire to fly at the old man and see if he had also embezzled her young ladies and concealed them upon his person. The Sicilian woman stood in a corner, trying to extract a single word that she could understand from this strange dialogue.

"You must, must, *must* let me go!" pleaded the old man, tears dripping between the thin white fingers that covered his face. "It is so easy for you to do it, and so hard for me not to have you."

The detective said nothing. He was look-

ing at his cards—a new set, extracted from still another pocket.

"I will give you every cent of the little I have, none of which I stole," still moaned the old man. "You could never find it else; nobody could. But I will dig it up and give it to you—only let me go!"

The Sicilian woman had perhaps caught some word or divined a truth about there being money in the case. She advanced a step, leaned her head forward, and listened, even with her black eyes.

"Oh, I have been so lonely!" still sobbed the old man. "There were sometimes years that I did not see the face of an American! Then I would disguise myself as well as I could and go down to the hotels and watch till I found one, and lurk around and look at him, but never dared to speak to one. A few times I have seen the faces of old friends — or who used to be my friends. Sometimes—"

There is no knowing how long this dreary monologue might have continued; but Miss Jareds, in the midst of a feeling of deep pity

for the aged culprit, mingled with abhorrence of his crime, could not help feeling that listening to an old man's tale of woe had nothing to do with saving two young ladies from worse. She rose and started for the door.

"Sit down," said Billetts, quietly, but conclusively. "He is a finger-post. He will guide us to the young ladies."

"And now, will you, *will* you let me go?" asked the old defaulter, piteously, looking up half hopefully.

"Upon one condition," replied the detective. "Here are the names of two young girls who have been decoyed away from this lady's party, probably by a villain whom you know. Find them for us before night and you are still free; otherwise—"

"I will find them, I will find them!" exclaimed the old man, so eagerly and genuinely that Miss Jareds's heart gave a jump. "Tell me the particulars, and I will get them for you if they are in Sicily!" he almost shouted.

Billetts gave him the particulars, so far as he cared to, and concluded with the sentence,

"Now you must first find Giuseppe Polly-polly-phemus for us, and that very quick."

The old gentleman had a hurried conversation with the detective and then with the black-eyed woman, her part of which was accompanied with more gestures than Miss Jareds had herself made during the current year. "Giuseppe is not here," he said to the detective, "and has not been since yesterday morning. His mother does not want you to get him to leave this country and her, and is not kind. We had better set forth at once and search for him. I will go with you this minute."

Just as he spoke the door opened to admit the very man they wanted to see—Signor Polyphemus—accompanied by the goat-milkman. The improvisatore did not seem at all like a kidnapper; he was meek and smiling, and carried his guitar in something that looked like a goat-skin bag. The detective took him aside immediately, repressing with a look Miss Jareds's frantic desire to search him for young ladies.

"I have no doubt your cousin has told

you the office I mean to give you," he said, in a mysterious half-undertone. "It will be a million of francs in your pocket. Soon you can come back home, and live without work all the rest of your life."

"That I will do!" replied the other, with delight. "The work of my life it is to live without work. I will go with you. Oh, and when do we sail?"

"As soon as we get our company all together," replied Billetts, with a cunning in his manner which almost made Miss Jareds forget his duplicity. "Two of them are out calling somewhere; you will have to find them for us."

Miss Jareds with great suffering repressed a desire to shout at him, "Yes, produce them instantly, you villain of villains!" but remained silent under the tyranny of circumstances.

"I will find them, sir; they shall be at the place soon!" exclaimed the improvisatore, joyfully. "Trust it me! Good-bye!"

"And now we will go back to the hotel," said Billetts, cheerfully. "We will all walk

together, except our venerable friend here, the mother of my orchestra."

"*I* had rather not go, sir," pleaded the old man; "I will help you all I can otherwise—"

"Oh, but you must step along with us!" insisted Billetts. "You are a part of the staff now, and I must know where to put my hand on you."

"So is that rascal of a guitar-player part of your staff, but you'll have work to find *him* when you want him," thought Miss Jareds. They started down the hill toward the hotel, pursued at a distance by the mother Sicilian, who, it seemed to Miss Jareds, was endeavoring to shout something very bad and improper at her fellow-pedestrians.

"Now what in the world are you trying to do?" inquired the travelling chaperon, speaking to the detective in a low but intense tone.

"This is the theory," replied Billetts: "this string-band and choir all in one has evidently decoyed these young ladies away

somewhere. If he is keepin' them for ransom he can't hope to make half as much out of them, even unlawfully, as I am baiting him with. He thinks he has not shown them his hand so fully but he can yet convince them that it is all a mistake, and as much theirs as his. You will see the girls the first thing when you get to the hotel."

And she did. They were placidly strolling along in front of the "Mazzini," but no Sicilian was with them. Instead were the Dolebeers, of Boston, a family of unquestionable respectability and against whom no one could entertain the least suspicion of abducting young ladies. It seemed they had come on by a late train, and were stopping at another hotel than that which held the Jareds excursion party.

"We ran across our intimate friends here," chirped one of the youthful maidens when the hurried introductions were over, "and took a walk with them. We knew it was against the rules, but our friends said

they would make our excuses. Are we excused?"

Miss Jareds displayed a large assortment of colors in her thoughtful face. She hardly knew whether she was glad of the young ladies' preservation or not if it had to be effected so entirely outside the regular methods. But she seemed to relent for the time. The goatherd stood in an impromptu stupor, trying to understand it all. The detective was engaged in gathering up the remains of his theory and burying them decently in the disturbed soil of his mind. The old black-eyed mother of musicians was several rods away—near as she dared be—bombarding William Billetts with expletives in the Sicilian dialect. The aged bank-defaulter crouched behind a half-ruined statue that stood near-by and peered hungrily at the Dolebeers. The other young ladies of Miss Jareds's party had left their rooms and come out in the open air by twos and threes.

The poor old exile financier suddenly rushed from behind the ruined statue, ran feebly to Mrs. Dolebeer, and opened his arms.

"I do not care what becomes of *me*," he shouted, hoarsely, "so that I hold my daughter once more in my grasp! Oh, my sweet child, you must forgive me for my crime just one minute and love me as you used to years ago!"

At this Mrs. Dolebeer burst into tears—an example that was promptly followed with variations by several of the young ladies present, most of whom had fathers in various states of preservation—and clung around her long-lost progenitor's neck in a way that threatened to strangle him upon alien soil. She immediately began saying a lot of things to him among her affectionate sobs, which nobody could understand any more than if she had been a native of the locality. Her husband finally acted as interpreter.

"Your crime was nothing but a mistake in arithmetical addition, our good father," he said. "You were fully vindicated within six hours after you left home; you were hunted for, advertised for, and then everybody gave you up as dead, except this queer,

or rather dear, girl, who coaxed me to travel round the world with her in one more search. She will not care about going any farther, and *I'm* not a natural tourist. You will return with us to Baltimore, be welcomed by your family, your old club, all the rest of your friends, and, I hope, have a good time the remainder of your life."

This was such an electric shock that the old man fainted—an example that was very nearly followed by two or three young ladies of the company. Miss Jareds, however, did not faint, neither did the old black-eyed Sicilian woman, who approached a little nearer and howled an entirely new series of anathemas. A large crowd of natives gathered round. Through the midst of them pushed Giuseppe Polyphemus, the improvisatore, accompanied by an official, or some one who assumed that rôle; and they dragged between them two new American young ladies that Miss Jareds had never seen before!

"Here be these two girls I think what has gone to call somewhere, out of your partie,"

he shouted, cheerfully though breathlessly, to Billetts. "They do not like to come, but I have make them do so. Shall we then zail to-morrow for America?"

"It has been a pretty hard day," said Billetts to Miss Jareds that evening when he had got everything arranged—having paid another five francs to the goatherd to still further bind the bargain, and told him to keep the animals till he called for them (which he will probably not do during the present century); having paid the improvisatore five francs for finding two young ladies who had nothing to do with the affair whatever, and narrowly escaped assault by their indignant brother; having paid the old Sicilian mother-of-guitarists five francs for her expletives, at a small fraction of a centime per word; having paid the fellow who posed as an official five francs for his services; having apologized, explained, and cleaved an armistice in the little war-cloud which hung over the half-desperate village; having made all his arrangements to depart for Naples,

Rome, Havre, New York, Boston, and Middlewitch Massachusetts, by the first train in the morning. "I know I did not win you according to our bargain," he continued, "but I tried my best, and shall continue to do so still." And Miss Jareds almost gave him an appreciable pressure of the hand as he took leave of her.

"How fortunate, dear father," murmured Mrs. Dolebeer the same evening, "that the detective found you up there! We took his address and shall reward him, and everybody concerned. To be sure, as you say, they did the right thing, as you did the wrong, unconsciously; but they were all working their best for humanity, and must be rewarded."

"Don't you ever *breathe* a word to anybody about it on *any* account," whispered one of the young ladies who had made so much excitement, to her room-mate that night. "But that handsome fellow with the guitar *did* meet us just outside the

cathedral this morning, and *did* ask us to go down to the shore and say he would sing for us, and *did* get us into a boat, and *did* row us away into one of those caves under the cliffs on the shore and sing a little while—too lovely-divine for anything, too—and then proposed to *both* of us, and said he understood he could have as many wives as he wished in *America*—and Jen *just* enjoyed it, but *I* didn't; and when we both *refused* him, he threatened to keep us there on macaroni and water *till* we consented, and, *just* as we were getting ready to cry, the Dolebeers came in there with their boat and a boatman, and *we* asked them to let us go with them, and *so* we transferred to their boat, and *he* left in a hurry, and we *made* the Dolebeers promise never to tell anybody of it; and *you* won't, will you now, for ever and ever, dear?"

And of course all of them kept their word; but the whole party were talking it over before they arrived at Messina.

THE ONE-RING CIRCUS

THE ONE-RING CIRCUS

THE Spectacular Regulative Society of White River Academy had its uses; but this story wishes to be understood as strongly disapproving of similar organizations, however much they claim or appear to be needed.

The S. R. S. was an effort to systematize and regulate those tempests of taste and torrents of feeling so likely to be displayed whenever several students are in an audience, and which are so liable to produce interruptions when anything displeasing occurs.

The organization numbered fully a score and a half more or less conceited young fellows who expected some day to be lawyers, physicians, clergymen, etc., etc., and was good for quite a number of impromptu recruits whenever an unexpected village war broke out that affected student interests. And al-

though these young fellows were conceited, they were for the most part steady and self-reliant, being from farms, shops, and logging-camps; and they were good for a rough-and-tumble fight at any time it was necessary and could not possibly be avoided.

The village "marshal," who was the only professional policeman in the place, was the not-altogether-Roman father of one of the members of the S. R. S., and was frequently not present when the town wanted him to help it as opposed to the gown.

So, although it was rather an absurd state of things, few secular assemblies ever felt happy during their entire existence unless they conformed to the rules of this eccentric organization, some of which were as follows:

"No lecture shall exist more than two hours at a time.

"No political speech can go on at one time longer than fifteen minutes without the introduction of an appropriate story.

"Whenever an anecdote is publicly told that has already been exploited in this town, the society shall arise in their places and

hold two or more fingers each aloft, which shall signify, 'We have heard this once or oftener before.'

"Every circus must make at least a traceable resemblance to all the pictures upon its posters before being allowed to leave town.

"No masculine elocutionist shall knowingly be permitted to read any 'little thing of my own,' or attempt to improve upon the language of established authors.

"Every lady reader, displaying whatever degree of efficiency or non-efficiency, shall be applauded by the cheering of the society for at least ten seconds after her attempt becomes a joy of the past. She shall also be encored twice during the evening.

"No brass band is allowed to interpret or manipulate the air of any song that has been popular for the past six months.

"Not more than half the recitations of any male elocutionist shall be in poetry.

"All sleight-of-hand performers shall first submit to the sleeve-gartering committee.

"Dramatic companies shall be allowed to use once only during the evening the follow-

ing sentences: 'Villain! I have found you!' 'Thus do I fling you off!' 'The die is cast, and we are now enemies forever!' 'I must dissemble!' 'Farewell, but we shall meet again!' and any other one of a list of thirty stock sentences, which will be furnished on application to committee.

"No person not a member of the association shall presume to hiss any performance, whether good, bad, or indifferent, under penalty of being propelled from the hall."

Etc., etc., etc.

These rules were claimed to have done a great deal, in their time, toward introducing a correct variety of entertainments into the little village; and members of the association professed never to exactly understand why the Faculty of their beloved institution finally abolished their beloved society. But it was in full force and at the very zenith of efficacy when Dirk Duckworth's Great International Before-crowned-heads Circus came into the town one day, dug a ring in the grass, and planted itself upon the semi-barren surface of a vacant lot.

Notwithstanding the brilliant name of this nomadic institution of public entertainment and instruction, it proved to be a very aged and humble member of the tent fraternity. When the Spectacular Regulative Society, after walking in the darkness half a mile through a rain-threatening mist, paid their "quarters" and took hard seats on certain small hill-sides of boards that had been reared for the purpose, they found that the tent was as old as if the material had been used for awnings on the ark, and that it had been patched until the original material seemed almost aristocratic in its dinginess. Dim lamps burned here and there, whose every flicker preached economy. The band played a number of good old tunes, in so doleful and undesirable a fashion as to go far toward explaining the fact that most composers of music die young. Everything was old—old—old; the Gospel of Novelty seemed far away, cavorting in some great three or four ringed circus maximus, more in accord with these great, gaudy head-line times. This show was evidently part of the driftwood of old days.

The ticket-seller, the doorkeeper, the guards, all were so meek and lowly that it was evident the establishment was in any depth of financial quagmire. It was a circus of the daddies come again, and the society took only the fraction of a minute to decide that the affair was going to be bad enough to be good.

"Lad's an' Gen'le*men!*" the ring-master was saying, "the next performance will be that of Mr. Waterloo de Garmo, who will introduce his great blood-curdling feat of riding at the same time two horses, bare-backed, saddleless, and bridleless!"

The ring-master had in one sense an athletic voice; it leaped upward and downward along the vocal gamut with perfect impunity, and the ear did not know where it was going to appear next; but he never forgot the professional die-away prolongation of the last syllable of his sentences.

Professor Waterloo de Garmo was a mild-looking but disreputable man, in dingy tights and tarnished spangles. He had evidently already done most of his circus-riding; was a little past middle age, and had appar-

ently not scaled any very high salary lists, for some time. Besides, there was an air of good-natured fatigue about him, which looked as if he had been recently reducing the spirit tonnage of the neighborhood.

The society evidently considered it necessary to encourage De Garmo in every possible way, and gave him all sorts of athletic advice, addressing him as "Peasley," which one of them loudly declared was his real name. The horses were meek-looking old fellows, who loped about with an air as if they were in the trucking line or something of the sort; and all the petty artillery of the ring-master's whip could not rouse them to any bursts of speed. "Brace up, Peasley!" "Step off and go afoot or you'll never get there, old man!" "Stop those horses!" "There's a law in this town against fast driving!" "How long is this thing wound up to go?" were among the not particularly bright things said to him.

De Garmo, whom the boys finally began to call De Garmo Peasley, was too easy-natured to furnish very good food for fun; he

seemed to rather enjoy the extra attention that was being thrown at him. "Good boys!" he shouted more than once; "wouldn't I jus' like (hic!) to have a whole night with you!"

This seemed to strike the society favorably, and bagged a cheer. But the ring-master, who was quite sober and hence cross, committed the error of shaking his fist at the organization, and consequently their whole attention was concentrated upon him; he was immediately christened "Wigs," in allusion to some hirsute additions plainly apparent. The angrier he became the better-natured as a whole was the society; and it seemed evident that the "master" would not be carried through to the end of the performance on flowery beds of ease.

"Ladies an' gen'le*men*," he shouted, after the convivial De Garmo Peasley had facetiously kissed his hand to the audience and disappeared—"Ladies an' *gen*'lemen" (with sarcastic emphasis on the last word and a glance at the society, which was met by a howl of derision), "the next performer will

be Madame Zoliska Metropolitana, the worl'-famed equestrienne, who will perform a brilliant, daring, and dashing ride upon her untamed steed Bucephalus!"

Bucephalus looked very much like one of the team with which De Garmo had just been slowly and industriously ploughing the ring, and as if there would never be any need of turning him away from his shadow; but was now equipped with a broad platform upon his back, which seemed as if it had been abstracted from the town hay-scales. One felt that the Madame possessed upon this domain plenty of room to stand, sit, lie down, dance, keep house, and receive visitors. She smiled as sweetly as her mature face would permit, managed to preserve her balance, occasionally ventured to stand gingerly upon one foot, and looked at the audience as if to say, "Did you ever expect anything to appear in this village quite so sweet-pretty, so agile, and so altogether impressive as I am?"

It is due the society to say that Madame Metropolitana was treated by it with perfect

chivalry. Whatever inextinguishable laughter may have raged within, there appeared upon the surface nothing but natural kindness and manufactured-while-you-wait enthusiasm. She was applauded, delicately and respectfully, through as dreary and commonplace a performance as was ever seen within a circus-ring; and so deftly was the praise given, and so exactly at the right time, that the poor old lady rode smiling back into the ragged little dressing-room, feeling that she had compassed one of the triumphs of her life—such as she used to have when a pretty child instead of a poor old rheumatic woman.

It might have been wished that equal consideration could have awaited the clown, a husky-voiced, asthmatic old fellow, who tried to be merry and say some smart things as wittily as when they were first divulged to the public scores of years before. But all his jokes were met by the society with a stillness that was tangible, and kept silent the few other people present, and with all the fingers of the hands extended, in token

that they had heard those things many times before.

The words of the ring-master, however, whether of reproof or command, to his dappled slave were met with the most hilarious shouts of laughter. A comic song which the poor harlequin essayed to sing was drowned like a litter of kittens by the society, who gravely substituted the doleful lyric intelligence that Old Grimes had shuffled off this mortal coil, and described his late costume at full length.

"Ladies an' gen'le*men!*" shouted the ring-master, when the song was over; "our next performance will be that of the world-renowned O'Whilleken Brothers in their wonderful, unequalled, and bewildering trapeze acts, which they have given with great acceptance and applause before all the crowned heads of Europe."

The O'Whilleken Brothers stood ready to enlighten the arena—one of them looking very much like De Garmo Peasley in another costume—when the ring-master continued, with an extra flourish:

"Ladies an' gen'le*men*, this performance is not half over yet" (hisses by the society), "but at its conclusion an additional entertainment will be given, consisting of songs and dances, by the celebrated Argentillo Family and their assistants. There will be songs, duets, quartets, choruses, jugglery performances, and other attractions, the whole offering such a feast of entertainment as has never been witnessed in this country, and will be afforded at the astonishingly low cost of ten cents.

"During the performance of the O'Whilleken Brothers, which is now about to commence, our gentlemanly agent will pass through the crowd selling tickets for the same."

And then, there being not many others connected with the show, the ring-master himself began to act the part of the gentlemanly agent and sell tickets, while the Brothers commenced their very safe and amiable trapeze performance.

The ring-master went along very well until he came to the outskirts of the society,

who began to guy him—to ask him, satirically, if he was the gentlemanly agent he himself had just described, to inquire of him if he was also the Argentillo Family, to try to learn of him whether he had pea-nuts for sale, to consult him as to the hire of dress-suits where he came from, from what farmer's carriage-house he extracted his whip, etc., etc. Whereat the poor fellow lost self-control entirely and shook his fist in the president's face.

Whereat, of course, it was only a minute's time when he was dragged into the arena, a fringe of adolescent humanity formed around him, and he invited, or rather commanded, to "have it out" with the student he had assaulted.

The ring-master threw a look at his proposed antagonist and at the crowd of brawny young fellows about, straightened himself up, and with the fullest force of his lungs shouted,

"HEY, REUB!"

This exclamatory phrase is the showman's cry of war. It is a signal at which every-

body connected with the establishment is expected to rally to the support of the one who gives it—for it is, maybe, a grand hailing sign of distress. Every one must come and fight to the utmost or be considered a coward ever after. This same ring-master had gained many a bloody battle to the tune of that terrible yell; had seen all the officers, rank and file, of more than one "greatest show on earth" marshal in serried ranks to repel invaders, and, if need be, strew the field with bloody corpses; but that was in the long ago, when he was a different man, and worked for companies rich enough to buy any ordinary town and sometimes a judge and jury.

Every one "rallied" now, but the effect was a weak one; it was a small company. It seemed plain that there was no object in a battle between tights and gown. "Is the marshal, or policeman, or constable, or mayor, or whatever you call it here—present?" he shouted in his loudest voice. "If so, I demand the protection of the authorities against this riotous mob!"

The marshal, or whatever one might call him, was not present just now. He had remembered other business at about the time of the commencement of the row in which his son was liable to figure, and slipped out under the tent. There was no response to the command, and an ominous silence reigned for a minute.

"You'll have to do your fight alone, Old Swallowtail!" shouted the orator of the society. "Shake your fist under the nose of one of the members of our honorable club, will you? Do it again, please, now, while he has his flippers ready!"

Howls of applause endorsed this period. "Fight or apologize!" shouted the crowd. "Row or back water!"

It was very evident that the circle of friends possessed in the town by that circus was not embarrassingly large. What few people were present besides the students sympathized with the latter, feeling that they had been deceived in the meagreness of the "show."

"He won't fight or apologize!" shout-

ed the orator. "Tear his canvas shanty down!"

These words fell hammering dangerously near some mental dynamite stowed away in the crowd all ready for explosion. There was a move made toward the side of the tent. "Clean him out! Clean him out!" came from several members of the society. The fate of the little travelling exhibition of physical deficiencies seemed decided: timid persons began rushing out of the tent; an old canvas-man sprang upon one of the seats and swore he would shoot the first fellow that dared touch a thing; he was pulled down into the crowd, in spite of his struggles and his rusty revolver, and sat upon by three of the heavier students.

"STOP!"

Through all the clamor a voice cut its way, sharp and distinct as the tone of a bugle, and was heard and heeded by every one, whether willingly or not.

"SIT DOWN EVERYBODY!"

There was something about the voice that commanded not only attention, but obedience.

"Everybody sit down, and I'll settle this in five minutes!" the same voice continued. "EVERYBODY SIT DOWN, I said! Did you hear?"

A habit acquired through long decades of managing large bodies of people and making them obey a human will had come to the fore, and asserted and employed itself. The crowd stepped back almost as if hypnotized. Within two minutes all were in perfect order, and the tent was as quiet as a properly conducted funeral.

The famous Dirk Duckworth, or such portions as time had left of him, stood in the middle of the ring. There was the face that had decked millions of posters in every State of the Union; but the picture was now partially enclosed in a thin frame of white hair; the surface of the skin had been ploughed into wrinkles; the form, while it retained a certain amount of symmetry and straightness, was that of a feeble old man. Still, the voice was loud and clear as need be, and he made something like the following speech:

"Gentlemen and patrons,—I presume you know who I am. I don't come to you no stranger. Not one of ye but's heard of me ever since you can remember; not one of ye but has throwed snow-balls at my profile on the fences an' walls; hardly one but has had a wild desire some time to sneak away an' go circusin' with me. Your fathers knew me too. When I had my menagerie an' circus combined, they used to bring you to see the animals an' then sneak into the circus afterwards by mistake. Say, fellers, look-a-here: do you know who's talkin' to ye?"

A half-involuntary cheer came from the crowd; it was listening to something genuine; here was the vocal shiver of true magnetism; and the society enjoyed his manner and his tone probably more than his words. He continued:

"Yes, boys, I've headed an' backed shows that was a-travellin' city in themselves—white palaces that could be built in a new town every day; I've made every community where they went remember 'em for years, as if a

friendly army had been there—circuses that a thousand dollars wasn't any more to than five is to this one now—shows that performed more than they could get bill-boards enough to advertise on.

"In all this time, young fellers, I was as square a travellin' man as could be found on any o' the turnpikes, iron or sand; never anybody was hurt in my ring but he got took care of out o' my pocket-book; never anybody found time to convince me that he was dead broke but I had leisure to give him a few dollars. Fellers, I mayn't look exactly like it now, but I tell ye that at that time I was general of the show army—I was mogul of the whole industry—such as it was. Maybe it warn't so very high of a ladder that I selected for to climb, or that selected me for to climb it, this circus business; but I tell you, such as it was, I stood on the top round of it, an' waved my hat to all the folks below, an' said, 'Git up here along with me ef possible, an' I'll reach down a tol'able clean sort of a hand, an' help you!'"

Another set of cheers, hearty and earnest, came from the society. The man's ways carried with them a force that the words could not have done.

"Yes, boys, you see it jest as I do. Whatever ye do, do well. I can't advise any of ye to study for the circus business—I don't advise ye what particular business you *should* go into; but when the train comes along that Nature give you a ticket for, jump on. Take passage, whether you're able to buy a ticket or not; go, if you have to hang to one of the steps for a while by your finger-nails! There'll be room enough for you after the next stop. If it's a train of doctors, preachers, lawyers, or whatever it is, boys, do it right! Do it thorough! Do it straight! And first you know you'll have one of the best seats in the drawing-room car, and then a state-room in one end of it, and then you'll hire a special train for yourself, and so on, an' on, an' on. But whatever you do, boys, you ain't agoin' to escape work. Work—work—work—in velvet or drillin', aroun' turtle-soup or hardtack, under a marble roof or an old can-

vas tent; work—work—work—high or low, rich or poor, every day an' every hour you're awake—an' that's just what I'm a-doin' now, boys, as undertaker o' this confounded daily funeral under a tent — I'm a-workin' along same as ever, an' a mighty sight harder!"

More cheers, and heartier, came from the society. The idea of somebody else's working is always a most popular one in this world.

"An' now, boys, I'm kind o' down, an' I ain't agoin' to tell the name of the opposition that done it. I had competition an' opposition right from the very start, an' that you're al'ays goin' to find — it's something that's intended for to help you; something you'd die without. But see here — there's two kinds of opposition, young fellers! One is the kind that you can hold off from you, an' fight at the proper distance, where you can see how to get a blow in good an' square; the other opposition is the kind that you receive right into your heart—take unreservedly into your system; take an' take till it becomes a part of you; take it an' lodge it an' feed it an' strengthen it all the while that it's

a-murderin' of you; take it till it makes you poor an' demented, an' constitutes a travellin' lunatic asylum of ye time an' ag'in. It's an opposition that has brought me right where I am, from the proprietor of one of the greatest travellin' combinations of mental, moral, athletic, herculean, terpsichorean, anthropological aggregations—all evolved each day from a vast and varied, glittering and scintillating procession of vehicular spectacle, progressing through the streets and avenues like an ancient Roman triumph—to a damned little one-horse show like this."

The anticlimax was pronounced with a concentrated venom and a genuine contempt that really made it cumulative in its force, and the cheers with which his peroration was received must have been heard by the very animalculæ in the innermost recesses of the old man's heart. When the noise ceased, there was an intense and respectful silence that it must have been a luxury to work upon.

"Boys, I have built my tent in every State an' Territory in the Union, an' in Can-

ada, an' on the other side o' the water; an' a greater traveller, so far as goin' over stretches of space consists, don't often come into this town. I ought to be settled down now somewhere near New York, rich an' comfortable an' reasonably happy; but that isn't the way things generally act up in this world. The opposition I was a-tellin' you of—he finally became a silent partner—a-keepin' up his attacks all the same—an' he ate me out o' house an' tent an' home — an' now I'm what you see—a poor man, just able to pay my bills in one town an' stand expenses to another. These actors here is mostly old employés o' mine, that's been with me through many a show an' many a fight; an' they'll never desert me as long as I'll keep my head up an' smile approval at 'em. They stay right along, an' do the best they can. But there's times when these people go hungry because I can't pay the bills to feed 'em, an' shabby because I ain't able to whack up their salaries. Still, we're all a-doing the best we can, we're makin' another start, an' some day we'll be on our feet

ag'in—some day we'll have a circus that *is* a circus — some day we'll come back here with a show that you won't be ashamed to be seen at — a show that the village police won't run away from. Till then, friends an' fellow-citizens, be a little patient, give us a chance, an' let the proceedings proceed."

Looking at the old man's white hair and wrinkled face, it did not seem very likely that he would ever again be the leader of a glittering triumph of any kind; but it showed how late the ruling passion will accompany a man, how near the ambition of life can venture to the precipice of death, and how Hope, that amiable but deceitful goddess, is willing to hold the lamp for it all the way along. The Spectacular Regulative Society, and everybody else in the tent, were on his side. The orator arose.

"Mr. President and members of the society," he shouted—"I move a vote of thanks for our venerable but hale and thoroughblooded friend, and that the rules all be suspended, and the Spectacular Regulative

Society elect Dirk Duckworth an honorary member!"

The motion went through with a yell, and our veteran showman, with all his comrades and belongings, was thenceforth under the protection of the society.

Everything went smoothly thereafter; the show succeeded beyond precedent; the gentlemanly agent climbed through the audience again, at its own urgent invitation, and sold tickets for the concert to every member of the society; De Garmo Peasley had his wish respecting a night with "the boys," and Dirk Duckworth was informed, as he pleaded old age and weakness, and took refuge in a stuffy room of the decrepit village hotel, that if he would make another date in the near future the society would attend to it that tickets enough were sold to give him the best audience of the season. He consented, with a dignified joyousness that was almost pathetic; but we heard a month or two afterwards that he had stranded again in an Ohio River town and been sold up by the sheriff.

THE CHRISTMAS CAR

THE CHRISTMAS CAR

I

TRAINS on the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad used to run at a terrific rate; at least it seemed so to the Colgrove children, who lived in a log-house some twenty rods from the track. Now we know very well that cars rarely travelled over twenty miles an hour in the days when railroads were first introduced into this country, and that twenty-five made a sensation, and people would mope and yawn in such conveyances at the present time.

But the trains on the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad went so much faster than an ox-team that, to the Colgrove children, they appeared almost as if flying; and the queer little family of almost innumerable tots regarded them as something in the celestial

line. They thought, or thought they thought, that the flaring little smoke-stack, with a sieve over the top to keep sparks from spreading, was the head of an angel—dark-complexioned, to be sure; that the cranks and drive-wheels might at any moment develop into wings, and float the whole outfit over woods and through clouds; and that the men who could ride on such a glorious creature, and control it, were themselves something more than human. Then, one day, when they saw the driver, or "engineer," as he was called in those regions, pull a lever and hurry the speed a little, they thought maybe the creature was a relative of the magic horse described in one of the old books in their grandfather's chest; which singular steed had a peg in the shoulder that had simply to be turned to make the animal go and come as the rider liked.

They were a kind of helpless lot of little creatures—the Colgrove children—for their father was an itinerant clergyman, away from home most of the time, and their mother a spasmodic invalid, who could not do much toward employing or amusing them.

So they would have been lonely but for each other; and a certain number of human beings, young or old, will easily wear each other out, after a time.

About all the folks they ever saw, except their own selves, were the people they caught glimpses of on the train as it passed—nearly the only bit of outside world they had ever known. To be sure, now and then a hunter, or wood-chopper, or travelling preacher came that way; and there were a few neighbors, at very long range. Once the nearest school-ma'am rode up to the door on a large, raw-boned horse, came in for a minute, and talked with the children. She was very interesting to hear, and good-looking, too, they thought — in the same way that the clouds are before a storm. She was very much surprised to find that the children had somehow taught each other to read, and could even write and cipher, in their queer, unsophisticated little way; and she asked them why they didn't go to school. Their little legs answered that, being only of the usual length, while the school

was six miles off, through swamps and "swales."

But she was terribly surprised at the questions they asked her, in such quaint and sometimes enigmatical language. Their father, a sort of refined, college-bred Peter Cartright, was a scholar, and had filled them with Roman and Grecian stories, as well as Scriptural ones. He had even insisted on their being given classical Christian-names, and they had taken all their ideas of the outside world from him. Their mother was an uneducated woman, though a bright one, and they had taken their dialect from her. They attacked the school-teacher with such queer little questions as these:

"School-mom, how did it happen that Remus hopped over the wall so easy? An' didn't Rom'lus ought to be hung for a-killin' of him?"

"School-ma'am, do you s'pose Diogenes's lantern made much of any show in the daytime? An' was it tin, like fawther's, when he goes to feed the cow, or did it hev little glass winders in it?"

"School-mom, did you ever see Sindbad the Sailor, or was he before your time?"

"School-mom, now don't you s'pose Tanterlus, when he stood in the water clear up to his chin, a-dyin' for a drink—don't you s'pose ef he had watched sharp he cud 'a' ducked his head an' got a swaller when Juperter wasn't a-lookin'?"

"School-mom, don't you s'pose Promethus cud hev kep' the eagle frum eatin' of him all that long time ef he had took a liver remedy?"—etc., etc.

Most of this was Greek, in two senses, to the young lady. She found herself unable to answer their questions with even a show of intelligence; and she soon jumped on her horse and galloped for home, resisting the importunities of the family to stop and have some supper. "I wouldn't have stayed another hour with the little lunatics for the best section of land in the county," she said to her sympathizing mother upon reaching home. "The preacher seems to have taught them a little of everything, and let them read anything they wanted to; and the crazier the

stories they hear and read the better they appear to remember them."

II

"Ain't it 'most time fur the train, Blandini?" asked Euripides, one day late in the autumn. The world was getting very lonely, now, for the leaves were all off the trees, and there were no flowers left. Their father had gone away somewhere to preach, and their mother was not well at all that day.

"I don't just know exactly what time it be," said Boadicea. "When fawther takes away the big silver watch that peels off like an onion, so's he can see how to not preach too long at a time, it al'ays seems like there was only two times a day, light an' dark."

"The old clock that looks like a little tall house with wheels in might tell us," said Hannibal, mournfully.

"It only tells us two times a day," said Blandini, with a little resentment toward it in her tone—"seven in the forenoon an' seven

in the evenin'. It don't be half earnin' its standin'-room."

"It'll hev to go to work ag'in when th' tinker comes in January," said Parthenia.

"Peddler's comin' sooner nor that," remarked Boadicea. "Said the last time he was here, maybe *he* kin fix it."

"Wish he could fix it 'fore Christmas," chirped Euripides. "Then ef Santa Claus come, he'd look to see what time it was when he got here, an' we cud set it back, an' maybe he'd stay longer an' give us more things outen his cutter."

"'The teacher of the neighboring school,'" said little Melpomene, doubtfully, quoting the title as accurately as she could, "says there ain't no Santa Claus."

This theory was met with such a general howl of malediction that it dropped dead and was never more referred to.

"But," said little Epictetus, "mother says he hardly ever brings much of anything down a log-house chimbley."

"I wish we had a frame-house fur him to come into," said Boadicea, reflectively.

"An' me too," said Parthenia. "S'posin' we go to prayin' fur it?"

"Prayin' fur it" was a very common thing with the Colgrove children. They did it in their own way, as everything else; but they were sincere and earnest little devotees, and often found their petitions answered. They had divided off in the matter of spokesman; taking different departments, as one might say. It was decided that Boadicea should pray for the frame-house, and she did it something as follows, while the rest said "Amen" with all their little hearts:

"O Lord! we're much obliged, and thank you ever so much, for this log-house that we live in! It's good, as log-houses go, although it isn't any palace, like Nero used to have. What we want is a frame one, so's that Santa Claus will bring his whole load down the chimbley of it, which please give it to us, if it ain't a-askin' too much an' too great a trouble. Amen."

III

Just as the quaint little prayer was done, they heard a roaring sound through the woods in the distance, which told them that the Erie and Kalamazoo passenger-train was coming. They all rushed out to see it, and, as usual, got as near the track as they dared (which still left an interim of several rods) until the train had come and gone.

"It don't go so fast to-day as it generally do," said Parthenia. "Oh, it can't be for stoppin', ken it?"

It was certainly for stopping. Not with the startling celerity that attends the air-brake of to-day. After the "engineer" had shut off steam, the fireman lowered an iron bar upon one of the small drive-wheels, stepped upon it, and gradually brought the little caravan of cars to a halt.

The Colgrove children had never seen a train stop before; it was a great sight to them. It was a still greater one when the passengers all alighted from the one

coach and employés began examining the wheels.

"It's jes as I tol' ye," shouted a man whom the children heard called "the conductor." "This journal's cracked, an' it ain't safe to run the car another rod."

The children were very much surprised to hear that the journal was cracked, although they had not the least idea as to what that was. But it gave them a new and somewhat depreciated opinion of the train to find that it could be disabled in any way. They felt a good deal as the Mexicans did toward Cortez's cavalry upon discovering that it was possible for its horses to be killed.

All the passengers grumbled when they found that the car must be left by the wayside; but there was no help for it, and it was pushed off the track, after a good deal of trouble, and rested peacefully upon a couple of rails improvised from two unfortunate saplings. The passengers, with more grumblings, crowded into the baggage-car; the engineer pulled a lever, and the train bustled out of sight.

The remainder of the day was occupied by the Colgrove children in seeing how near they dared go to the disabled coach. They would not, by any possibility, get opposite either end of it, for fear the thing would start and run them down; but in the course of two or three days they became more daring. At last, noticing that the train went past each day with another car in place of it and that it invariably resisted the temptation of jumping up and joining the procession, they ventured nearer and nearer; and, no locks being upon the door, they finally visited the interior in a body, having taken with them enough provisions for one meal, in case they were carried away in it.

Although it would be called a very crude piece of rolling-stock by the present generation, the little coach was a fairy palace to the Colgrove children. They used it for all sorts of things—their car, their fairy chariot, their university, their mansion. They decorated it with all the pictures they could find or make; they lugged as many books out of the chest as they could smuggle there, and

started a small, quaintly arranged library; as cold weather came on, they gathered wood and built a fire in the small stove at one end of the establishment, and so kept warm and cozy. Their nervous mother considered the stranded vehicle as a godsend, since it gave her some peace in the house, and let them do about as they liked in regard to it. Their father was still away, doing evangelistic work among woodmen on the outskirts of the Detroit Conference.

One afternoon the Colgrove children had got temporarily tired of working the different possibilities of the car, and had been silent for a full ten minutes. Then little Boadicea looked up and said, "I hev just thought of something. This car is an ans'er."

The children all knew what "an ans'er" was, but waited to see how the car could be called one.

"Well, it come right after we'd been a-prayin' for a frame-house fur to receive Santa Claus in," said the little girl. "It was that very day an' hour. An' that's jus' what this is."

It fell upon the children with the full force of a revelation; and from that minute they went to work to adapt the place to his reception. They studied all his idiosyncrasies, as far as they could get at them, from what they remembered and wrung out of their mother. They hung wreaths for him of some wild evergreen pines they found in the vicinity; they traced "Welcome, Santa Claus!" in rude woodland letters, and they concocted a letter to be posted in a conspicuous place, inviting him, after he had got through with his night's work, to come back and stay two or three days with them and rest. "We think you will like us," this strange little missive concluded. "We will bring over one of the feather-beds, and you can sleep here nights."

Everything was ready; it was the morning of the 24th of December, and they were full of expectation. Their father, who had hoped to be home to spend Christmas, was still delayed; there was an unusual sunburst of divine grace on the outskirts of the Detroit Conference, and he hated to leave it

just then. "You won't get much from Santa Claus *this* year," said the fretful mother—"not ef you had a four-story buildin' to let him into."

But the little flock had done a good deal of praying during the past few days, and they were full of faith. All they lacked now was a chimney big enough for him to come down; they knew he could never get through the stove-pipe. So it entered their heads to enlarge the space around the pipe in the roof of the car; and they had just smuggled the old wood-pile axe over to the scene of expectation, when a locomotive came up beside the car and stopped.

They had become quite used to seeing the trains go by, and, beyond crouching away from the windows and keeping down the fires at such times so as not to show any smoke, they had relaxed all precautions. But this was, for the day, the private locomotive of the superintendent of the road (railway officers did not have private cars in those times); and a great, bearded, rough-looking man came in upon them

before they had time to get out of the way.

The Colgrove children were pretty middling well frightened. They felt like burglars, incendiaries, murderers, and train-robbers all at once. They huddled together and looked at the rough, coarse-appearing man, so different from their home-spun but still refined-looking father.

"An' what are you a-doin' here in our car?" were the first words they heard. "Usin' it for a residence, eh? A pretty litter you've made around here. Do you want to all go to jail?"

Little Boadicea was fairly frightened into bravery. She inaudibly for a second joined herself in prayer, as she afterwards described it, and gave him the whole story before he had time to say another word. He took one more glance around the car, and went out of the door on the platform.

"Raymond," he yelled to a man who was oiling the engine, "for Heaven's sake come here an' see this lay-out!"

The two men stood in silence and looked

things over for a minute; then the superintendent stepped a little nearer to the young invaders, and said, in a softer voice:

"I lost two little fellows about your size a year ago. I wish they could be here to help you prepare for Santa Claus; but — they've forgot all about him.

"Hang up your stockings, and leave things as they are, children; go back to the house, and come over again in the morning. Santa Claus will arrive some time in the night. It won't be in a cutter; he'll come on a special engine."

A BUSINESS FLIRTATION

A BUSINESS FLIRTATION

I

One of the hottest days that New Jersey had known that summer closed at last with the celebration of a singularly gorgeous sunset. A soothing coolness from the neighboring hills was brought by a cozy, whispering little breeze that seemed to encourage all Nature in drawing a long breath. The tired little country world in which Badger McPherson was a pilgrim and a stranger became more lively and aggressive; sounds of mirth and jollity came to him from green farms along the broad white ribbon of a wagon-road on which afoot and alone he was journeying. Once in a while strains of vocal music, their roughnesses softened by distance, came from some one of the little

valleys or hill-tops and made him homesick.

The young man had a long cylinder under his arm, about the length of a Winchester rifle. But it was not a gun, for it had no lock, stock, or barrel. Neither was it a telescope, although the young gentleman had a scholarly look. It was not a roll of manuscript with gigantic pages. It was a parcel of maps.

Badger McPherson was a fine-looking, well-limbed young theologue from Princeton. He was still a Junior, but had studied enough to compel him to brace up his health with a great deal of athletics and resolution. He was ambitious, and felt that he had undeveloped talents, if not genius, that would burst forth into an arc of oratorial electric lights immediately after ordination. His primary idea was, of course, to succeed in winning souls from the wrath to come; but he had no objection to the possession of more or less earthly affection. In fact, in the pictures that he painted of his future ministrations there were a good many worldly

successes interspersed. He had decided not to be an ascetic in any form, and had quite a long list of earthly pleasures on the programme-tablets of his mind—not incompatible, he thought, with his divine mission.

One of these pleasures was that of flirting; innocent social amenities he called it. He had a best girl down in Wilmington, Delaware, and loved her very dearly, but they could not be together all the while; he did not know exactly when they would be able to marry, and, being more than usually attractive, why should he not make himself agreeable to the other sex? he thought.

Badger McPherson was, greatly to his constant chagrin, poor; he had nothing but his life, and even that was mortgaged. He was making his way through college with borrowed money, secured from a half-philanthropic money-lender, with an insurance policy on himself.

There were several other students in the college besides Badger who had none too much spending-money, and some, not so needy, who wished a summer "business

lark" and a slight addition of money to their purses; and so had been organized at the beginning of that summer "The Scholastic Canvassing Club."

This was a small devastating army of students who went through the country armed with maps of the United States, made, according to the publisher and the general agent, with a minuteness and completeness that topographical science had never dreamed of before. These commercial troops marched in parallel lines through several counties of the State, captured what unsuspecting farmers they could, and organized their prisoners of the subscription-list into "clubs," each student receiving a commission for every victim he made.

The young gentleman walking down this particular road had not to-day done a good ten hours' work, although expending so much eloquence and erudition that he felt on the verge of mental bankruptcy. People did not want maps just then; the resident population seemed quite content to stay mentally as well as physically within their present environ-

ment, without any reference to other States and Territories. He had been asked two or three times why he didn't work for a living; a benevolent-looking old lady had offered him his dinner if he would saw a cord of wood; once he had been taken for a tramp, and ordered to "move on there now!" when he tried to enter the gateway to a rural nabob's mansion. He began to have some little babyish thrills of homesickness, alternated with defiant flashes of feeling in regard to how these people would stand it when they should hear of him as the most popular pulpit orator of the land. He had procured their addresses, one from another, as he went along, and vowed to sometime send them all tracts and sermons (of his own composition, of course) until they trembled for an undesirable eternal future, produced partly by indifference to unknown theological students and partly by ignorance of the map of the United States.

As the sun went inexorably out of view he began to wonder in what house he should stay all night, or if he should have to sleep

in some uninteresting barn, with the permission of the horses, mice, and insects within it, or in one of the rough, improvised bedchambers of a straw-stack. He had been told by several well-to-do members of the Farmers' Alliance that they were not in the lodging-house business that year; that they didn't find keeping boarders profitable; that there was a neat little tavern a few miles farther on, etc., etc. But his purse was light, and his heels growing heavier and heavier, and he determined at last to make a most desperate effort to assist in getting back some of the money laid out on a house-roof.

He finally saw a handsome old farm-house on a grove-sheltered hill just ahead of him, and determined to sleep in that abode if human ingenuity could obtain the desired permission. He hid his sample-case of maps in a very obscure recess of a covered bridge, and went, with a refined boldness, up to the hospitable-looking door of his chosen shelter for the night.

A handsome, aristocratic-looking old mastiff lay on the broad piazza near the steps.

This singular cur had none of the standard accomplishments of ordinary bucolic dogs, which are to howl wildly at unoffending people passing the house, and to worry every casual visitor into temporary nervous prostration. "This dog knows that I don't belong to his race," mused Badger. "He recognizes a gentleman when he sees one." The fine old animal did not even rise. He twisted a friendly, intelligent eye up toward the young topographical missionary, as if to say, "Good-evening, sir; I will waive the formality of smelling of and nipping at your heels, as it is you; you'll find the people of the house just inside," gave a civil wag and a half to his tail, and composed himself again to canine reminiscences.

"I was taking a pedestrian tour, have been belated, and stopped here to see if you could put me up for the night."

This little historical half-romance Badger recited to the courtly old gentleman who came to the door, and in a manner with which Lord Chesterfield would, under the circumstances, have found no particular fault. It surprised

Badger to see how fluent and magnetic he really was with no maps to encumber him.

"Certainly you can stay, sir," replied the old gentleman, with a glance at the good-looking young fellow and a confiding air that cost the young man some feelings of mild remorse when he thought of the different reception he might meet if the covered bridge could run in and say a word or two. "Certainly, sir. Your name, please?"

The gay student presented one of his cards, which he fortunately had with him, labelled "Mr. Badger McPherson, Class —, Princeton University," and from that time was an honored guest in a very fetching domestic circle.

The family was large, but orderly and refined; the essence of good rules, without their substance, appeared to pervade everything. It was a great piece of luck, this falling in with a first-class family; and its congeniality rested him more than he could tell even himself. He wished there were a relay of such families all the way along the line he was to travel. But this seemed impos-

sible. It was the first evening of the kind he had found in the whole trip.

The courtly old gentleman who had met him at the door had a harmonious, lady-like wife and two sons and three daughters, evidently acquired somewhat late in his prime; and, with a rather bold flight of the imagination for a young theologue, Badger had the glimpse of a feeling that he would like to possess just such a family (with a city twist on it) when he had captured the world by his pulpit eloquence, and was pausing a little to take spiritual and physical breath.

The supper being over, there was a miniature informal party in the cozy but spacious sitting-room, in which the young man shone brilliantly and became a doubly welcome guest. He told several exhilarating college stories, of which he was himself the half-admitted hero; joined all the songs, with a very passable and adjustable voice, which could be utilized as a tenor, alto, soprano, or bass; suggested that one of the boys should try a course in his college; drew wildly ex-

citing pictures of tennis, football, and rowing tournaments; recounted all the first principles of college athletics; and really lighted up the old farm-house as it had not been for some time before.

The pet serpent of flirtation, however, soon managed to creep into this happy little domestic garden. The eldest daughter was about eighteen; a charmingly half-incomprehensible kind of young lady, and one that constantly put poor Badger on his mettle. She fascinated him in a way that caused him to almost pity his "best girl" down at Wilmington, although at heart he was faithful enough. Her eyes contained an expression of combined recklessness and pathos that he did not remember having found before. Her laugh was musical, but possessed the least tinge of bitterness — that touch or shade which makes some girls' merriment so queerly charming. He found himself in a mild sort of flirtation — a fit of false falling-in-love—a superficial frenzy, that was delightful while tantalizing. It was his imagination at work (or play) rather

than his heart; but in an intense manner, such as he had never used before in a flirtation, although something of an artist in these affairs of the outer approaches to the heart. It seemed perfectly natural to find himself at last standing on the veranda alone with her, communicating the names of the different stars in sight, fancying he saw them all reflected in her eyes, and mentioning that fact, with a slight confirmatory pressure of her hand, which he had managed somehow to borrow for a few moments.

"Oh, you are probably like all the rest of your terrible sex," she purred, softly, with that bitter-sweet laugh which puzzled while it thrilled him; "you flatter us poor girls, and get us to liking you, and then forget everything you have said, and us too, as soon as we are out of sight."

What could poor Badger do, he thought, but give her hand a little pressure of protestation, and state his firm intention never, never to forget her, in tones whose soft touch upon the ear was at least first-cousin to tenderness.

"Still it is easy enough to *say* you will never forget any one, you know," insisted the young maiden, changing the stars reflected in her eyes to falling ones. "But when it comes to really *doing* anything for her—sacrificing, you know—why, then, your whole race is faithlessness itself."

This innocent little verbal trap caught poor Badger completely. He asserted that she was cruelly mistaken in *him*, that he would be willing to do anything he could for her in the world, even at the risk of his life; and she must surely let him know whenever he might be of any service whatever.

"Which I certainly will," she replied, in a strangely sweet tone, and with a very slight pressure of the hand—so delicate that he was almost in doubt whether it were real or imaginary. And soon afterwards they parted, with a very congenial and rather lingering good-night.

II

It was about half-past eleven, and Badger was in the neat room where he had been billeted, writing—not to his best girl in Wilmington, Delaware, as he had intended, but to one of his more confidential college chums. "I'm staying in a dandy place to-night," he had just said; "fine old farm-house—people cordial and well-bred—and have met here one of the divinest rural maidens you ever saw, Tom. I have never before found such a singular combine of keenness, simplicity, and loveliness. 'She is deep; but the depths are clear as the unsullied latent waves of a placid sylvan lake.'" (He had borrowed from himself a figure that was in one of his note-books, entitled "Ornaments for Future Sermons when in Hurry.") "If you could only see her, Tom—"

There was a dainty little tap at the door. The young man hurriedly donned a coat, which he had thrown off for ease, and, to his great surprise, admitted the young lady

he had been writing about only a few instants before.

"You are very much surprised," said this girl, in a low mystery-voice, making a very pretty picture of herself as she stood gracefully outlined against the dark wall with the lamp-light shining full upon her. And, indeed, Badger, who fancied he had upon his person a rule never to be taken off guard at anything, was somewhat startled, and blushed, in spite of several consecutive efforts to the contrary.

"All the people are in their 'little beds' but us," she continued, with an expansion of simplicity that gave the good young man an almost fatherly feeling toward her. "Nobody can know I am here, unless—unless—" (with a very slight instalment of the bitter-sweet laugh) "you choose to tell them. I knew you would be up, for students are always decreasing the oil-products of the country while other people dream. You said, a little while since, that I was to let you know when you could serve me. I told you I would. Well, I have come to let you know."

Badger had recovered his rule never to be surprised, from the pit into which it had temporarily fallen, and waited calmly for further information, though with a considerably accelerated movement of the heart.

"I thought you didn't mean it, you know," continued the young lady, looking at him gravely and steadfastly. "But I got to thinking afterwards, and decided that you did. I will tell what I want in a very few words, and you can do it for me easily. I want you to elope with me."

"Goodness-Mercy! What does the girl mean?" mused poor Badger. He lost his rule never to be surprised this time, completely and unreservedly, and admitted it, even to himself.

"You surprise me very, very, very much!" he said, in a hoarse whisper. "What in the world *do* you mean? Why, here you have known me only four or five hours, and now want to elope with me! What *can* you be thinking about?"

"You heard every word I said," insisted the young lady, with a lovely dignity that

precluded any idea of "softness" or intending forwardness. "I believe you can be trusted. And I want you to elope with me —to-night."

McPherson felt flattered — why should he not?—even in the midst of the horror aroused by the proposed enterprise. To be sure, he knew that he was attractive enough, you know, and had some ways of his own, of course, and he believed — that is, he couldn't help believing—he was somewhat magnetic, you see, and girls *would* fall in love with him once in a while, of course; so he must do the father, brother, and spiritual-adviser act all in one in this case; it would make a very pretty and creditable story to tell Tom, and one or two others — though the best girl at Wilmington must, of course, never hear anything about it; and—it would be *right*. He nerved and composed himself for the contest with this dainty little morsel of misdirected sentiment.

"My dear girl," he said, quietly and friendlily, taking one of her hands in his with a somewhat awkward paternal air, "you must

pardon me for solemnly warning you against this infatuation."

"But what use is it to warn me?" asked the girl, looking him straight in the eyes with an air of graceful honesty that he could not but respect while he admired. "There is no escaping the infatuation. I do not think Heaven meant me to escape it."

"Oh yes, it did!" insisted Badger, quite positively. "Heaven always intended so lovely a girl should escape everything wrong. And, besides, it would be impossible for me ever to join my fate with yours in the bonds of holy matrimony. I—am—am—am—engaged." The best girl at Wilmington, Delaware, shed her benign influence upon Badger's soul just now, and gave him a glow of pride that he was able to be thus faithful in the midst of dire temptation.

"Oh, the stupid I am!" she exclaimed, her little, slightly bitter laugh encompassing the remark like soft music in a drama. "I didn't tell you all. It is not *you* I am infatuated with. I don't want *you* to join your fate with mine in holy matrimony; I

want you to take me to another young man."

The opportunity for doing this dear child good still remained; but it must be said that Badger's interest in the matter suddenly sustained a decline, in spite of himself, and the whole affair became tedious and almost disgusting. He tried hard not to make an exhibit of this fact; but the quick intuition of the girl understood, and half pitied him for it. He tried to smile, but his smile was all made-land, and existed entirely in the lower regions of his countenance; the eyes, which everybody finds it at times hard to control, did not join in the facial festivity, but had a feeling-disappointed-in-spite-of-yourself look.

"You see, I couldn't help it," she murmured, looking at McPherson pettingly and half pityingly. "I met him years ago, and —loved him at first—and—love him more and more, the longer I know him—just as any one would you—I am sure—just as your sweetheart does you now, probably. Don't you see?"

Badger replied that he saw, and tried hard to view the whole matter in a way not uncomplimentary to himself; still, with a feeling that his vanity had received a curiously hard blow.

"But, in that case, what do you want to elope with *me* for?" he inquired, with the slightest twist of asperity to his tone. "What do you want to elope for anyhow?"

"That is the curious part of it," mused the girl, "and the most difficult. You see," with a deep, brooding look in her glorious eyes which the best girl in Wilmington, Delaware, could not approach, "I love him—I love him so—"

"Yes, you love him," interrupted Badger, with increasing curtness, which he toiled hard to keep courteous. He began already to feel nearly exhausted with this fellow whom she "loved—loved so." "You told me that. But what do you want of *me?*"

"Oh," persisted the eccentric beauty, "I *ought* to love him awfully well; for I'm the only one of the family that does. They all hate him but me—poor, dear, unappreciated Hughie!"

So "Hugh" was the given name of this fellow, who was, no doubt, a rascal. Badger had never liked the name Hugh, anyway; and its pet elongation into "Hughie" struck him as peculiarly idiotic and unpleasant. His own best girl had sometimes called him "Badgie," but even that seemed "stale, flat, and unprofitable" just now.

"Father, mother, brothers, sisters, all hate him," continued the maiden, pensively. "Even Voltaire never would let him come into the yard, if he could help it."

"Who is Voltaire?" inquired Badger. "Another fellow?"

"Voltaire is our family dog," replied the girl. "We named him that because he does not revere his Maker. Everybody is down on poor Hughie except me, and I never, never will desert him! He is unfortunate, and most people hate misfortune, even in anybody else. He has explained all his troubles to me, and I am the only one that understands him. All the rest of the world is against him."

A large, symmetrical tear, that had been

listening to the conversation from behind the corner of one of her eyes, now discovered itself, came boldly out, and, in a manner, tried to join the company. But it was promptly rebuked and sent away. This girl was no maiden Niobe, no matter what else she might be.

"Well," replied Badger, getting his second wind, "the elopement industry is generally understood to be a wicked, dangerous, everlastingly regrettable kind of business; but, for the sake of the argument (laying your own sake aside for a moment), if you two want to elope, why in the world don't you do it? Why doesn't he come here, chloroform Voltaire, and run off with you like a man? Why do you go telling other folks about it, and try to get them to go along with you? Why doesn't he—"

"He is not able," murmured the young lady. "He cannot go anywhere just at present. *I* can elope, but he can't, for an hour or two yet, at least. He—he—isn't very well. Poor, dear Hughie!"

"Where is he?" asked Badger, in rather

an authoritative tone, feeling that there must be something very queer, if not crooked, in the young man in question.

"Hughie is in—in—in—jail," replied the maiden, with a quaver in her sweet voice. "But he has explained it all to me; how he happened to be found with the horse, the silks, and the jewelry, and the marked bills, and the counterfeit money, and all the things that they have been accusing him of. Oh, it is too bad! If they knew Hughie as well as I do, they would understand that he never would demean himself so as to steal horses, dry-goods, and things!"

"It is indeed unfortunate that the authorities hold the opinions you mention," replied Badger, dryly. He was fast dropping into sarcasm. "But admitting, for the sake of the argument (and laying your own sake aside once more), that he is innocent, I should not think he would be in a very good condition to receive visitors in the dead of night, until after he had been tried and acquitted."

"No," replied the young lady, thoughtfully, but with growing cheerfulness, "he is

not in a very good condition to receive visitors, but, for my sake, he will brace up to it. He has been tried and convicted, and will be sentenced and taken to state-prison to-morrow, unless we go and help him out to-night! I have gathered enough getting-out tools to let him through to me in ten minutes. The jail is old, rotten, and crazy. He can haul everything through the grates by a string. He can cut a whole window in a few minutes, he says, if he only has the tools. Poor Hughie is a natural mechanic. Then, you see, away we go, Hughie and I, to some place where true worth is appreciated, and innocent young men are not accused of burglary and other absurd crimes. I have gathered up enough money to keep us till poor Hughie is proven innocent. We will commence life over again, my true-love and I!" And she smiled Badger and the absurd idea sweetly in the face.

"Well, in the name of all that's diabolical, go on and do it, then!" blurted out the student, now thoroughly off his temper. "If you're bound to wed yourself to vice

and crime for the remainder of life, forge ahead. But why should you try to mix *me* up in it? I've enough delinquencies of my own, without going into partnership with 'Hughie.'"

"Oh, have *you* delinquencies?" inquired the girl, with so demure and well-balanced a manner that Badger has never been able to decide whether she was sarcastic or in earnest. "I thought *you* were about perfect. But I tell you Hughie is innocent!" with a slight flash in her steady but constantly changing eyes. "It will be proved so, some day, he says; and Hughie wouldn't tell me a lie — oh no, he would die sooner! He said so." (Badger reflected solemnly and savagely on the depths to which woman's infatuation could descend.) "It was all a mistake—a whole lot of mistakes. If he can only get out, now, before he has incurred the disgrace of going to state-prison, and stay under another name somewhere where he can be appreciated, it will be all right. And that's what I want you to help me to help him to do!"

"Well?" punctuated Badger, with sullen curiosity.

"You see," continued the enterprising young lady, "I will tell you just how we can make it all come out, including Hughie. The jail is only four miles from this house. We will steal from here quietly and hitch up our best horse; in a half-hour we can be there. Hughie will be expecting me; he always is, and especially to-night. He whispers through the grating, and says, 'Is that you, Co?' (Co is my short name for Columbia.) 'Yes, Hughie, and be awful quick,' I will say. 'Throw out your dangler.' (That's what poor Hughie calls a string in that connection. I'm afraid he has learned some slang in that terrible jail.) He throws out the 'dangler,' and pulls up the 'priers,' as he calls them, opens the crazy old window of grates, or whatever it is, draws up a rope-ladder, and is soon on the ground beside me."

"In such a case, two would be a *tête-à-tête* and three a convention," replied Badger. "So you've no use for me, and I certainly have none for the proposed excursion of in-

nocents. So good-night, and a pleasant journey."

"Oh, but you can be of more use than you think!" insisted the girl. "Let me go on. Poor Hughie gets to the ground and sees you. He says, 'Who's this bloke you've got with you?' (Hughie was always a little jealous of me.) And then I say, 'It's not a bloke, Hughie, but a dear, good, sweet theological student from Princeton, who says he will do anything in the world he can for me; and now he's proving it.' And then, you see, dear Mr. McPherson, *you* climb up the rope-ladder and get into the cell in Hughie's place—"

"The—that is, the dickens I do!" growled Badger, under his breath.

"You understand," continued this singularly well-informed young lady, "the jailer has an inopportune way of owling through his old dungeon once an hour just nowadays, and peeping into all the cells, on account of some restless and desperate counterfeiters that need watching. If he should see that Hughie was gone when he came around

next time, he would shout, and ring bells, and call out the militia or something, and we should be caught. It will take us till broad daylight to get to the cave in the woods, which we will make our first hiding-place, and we need all the time. Now you climb up the ladder, get into the cell, replace the windows and things, put on poor, dear Hughie's coat—having exchanged with him before you climbed up—lie with your face toward the wall, and when the jailer peeps in he thinks Hughie is there, and goes along about his business. You lie quiet that way till he does that three or four times, and Hughie and I are well on our road. Then you — you — shin down the ladder, as poor Hughie calls it, mount old Plunger—an extra horse that we will take along for that purpose—and before our family are up you can be snug in bed here. You will have to be a little cross with Plunger or he may throw you over his head; but I know you can manage him, being an athlete. How fortunate that all students are athletes in these days! And now," she

continued, in a hurried manner, as if Badger had already eagerly fallen into her plans, "we must be off immediately. The horses are harnessed, saddled, and waiting, although —poor, dear pets!—they don't know what it's for." And her eyes moistened a little for these honest, unconscious steeds of the farm, for whom she evidently entertained a genuine love.

"Who the—that is, who the dickens harnessed and saddled them?" said Badger.

"I did," replied the young lady, "just before I came in here. I must now go to my room and write a farewell note to my parents and brothers and sisters." She burst into tears for the first time, but recovered herself immediately. "Steal softly through the door, and meet me twenty rods down the road, to the west of here. Don't make any racket; there's no need of it. The doors are all unlocked — the hinges oiled. Now be sure!" And this wonderfully determined and high-spirited girl fought back her tears, gave Badger's hand a hearty comrade-like pressure, and was going.

"And you think I will join in such an insane, such a thoroughly wicked expedition?" groaned the student.

"What! are you backing out?" exclaimed the girl, turning round with a withering glance. "Afraid to do a little thing like that to save my life from being wrecked, when only a few hours ago you were ready to die for me? You don't dare do it! Oh, you don't *look* so very much like a coward!"

"I am not a physical coward, I think," replied McPherson. "But I am afraid to help you in a course that will not only wreck your life, but your soul."

"I tell you you don't know Hughie!" shouted the thoroughly infatuated girl, in a half-whisper. "He doesn't go around wrecking souls, or hearts either. He is as good, as true, as honest, as you are. Oh, you don't know him, you don't know him—you don't care or dare to help him or me! Then I haven't one friend, till I get to him, and I will go alone! Good-bye!" She started to leave the room.

Badger was thinking very fast. He judged

he saw the right way out of the difficulty. It would certainly be no sin to deceive this wayward, headstrong girl, in order to keep her from ruin. He let himself down gingerly into a bit of pious strategy. "Well, if you put it that way," he said, "I can't resist you. I don't know as a little lark like that would hurt me, after all. You are sure I can get back in time?"

"Oh, certainly, certainly!" exclaimed the delighted girl. "You are so good—so kind—so brotherly!"

"Hardly brotherly," replied the dissembling youth. "A brother wouldn't do this sort of thing for you. He'd lock you up first."

"More than a brother, you are!" exclaimed the girl. "A brother that understands me; a brother that helps one the way she wants to be helped! Oh, it was *lovely* lucky that you happened to come here! You are *so* good!"

She threw her arms around the young man's neck and gave him a thrilling, never-to-be-forgotten kiss. It was an innocent

though intense caress of gratitude, but a bewildering one. Poor Badger forgot the Delaware young lady entirely for a moment. But with the reaction came more than ever a feeling that he must save this glorious creature; must keep her from the criminal who had somehow entrapped her in the meshes of his fascinations, and was trying to drag her down to himself.

"I must hurry," she exclaimed. "It is almost time we started. Oh, I shall soon be in dear Hughie's arms again!" And she, who had just had poor Badger for one stunning moment in her own, had flown softly to her room.

That last sentence did not decide the young man, but it hastened him. He happened to know where her father's bedroom was, for the courtly old gentleman in last evening's conversation, he remembered (although it seemed now about a century agone), had been explaining the peculiar and advantageous construction of his little rural mansion.

He felt, as he stood there after knocking, like Iago rousing Brabantio to inform him

of Desdemona's famous elopement with the brawny Othello. Fortunately the old gentleman was a light sleeper and his wife a heavy one. He hastily threw on his garments and came to the door. He saw in a moment who it was, by the lamp that Badger had brought with him.

"What is it, sir?" he said, courteously. "Are you ill?"

"No, sir," was the reply; "but I feel it my duty to inform you that your eldest daughter is in her room, preparing to elope with a Mr. Hugh Somebody after helping him out of jail. She—"

"Come with me, sir, if you please," interrupted the old man, who, evidently from former information, comprehended matters immediately. "I would like to have you with me." And they proceeded to the young lady's room—Badger very reluctantly, but not knowing exactly how to avoid it. She was in the midst of her note of farewell when interrupted; she had locked her door, as she supposed, but the bolt had slipped outside the slot, as they sometimes will do when

shot in a hurry. The old gentleman now locked it with quite noticeable precision.

"I am very sorry, my dear daughter," he said, kindly, "that you yet hold your extraordinary infatuation for that young man, and are willing to carry it to such lengths. Have I not often tried to warn you against evil-doers? Have you not read in the Good Book not to follow the steps of him that goeth astray?"

She said not a word, but retreated to a corner, where she stood like a half-penned tigress about to spring. Badger, somehow or other, found himself standing in an opposite corner, just as far from her as he could get. The old gentleman proceeded:

"My dear, you have never become sufficiently acquainted with this Holy Book, although possessing such a beautiful edition of it." He picked up an elegant Oxford copy, and seated himself at the table on which she had just been writing her letter of farewell, at which he glanced, saying, in a kind but judicial way: "Very well composed, my dear. You are improving in English com-

position. Only the material — the subject-matter—is at fault."

The good but shrewd old gentleman turned to the Proverbs of Solomon, and read aloud everything he could find that bore upon the case. The girl half threw, half crouched herself gracefully on a small sofa near the corner, and said never a word.

The young student would have gone to his own room, but the door was locked and the key in the other man's pocket. So he stood and listened (getting mighty tired, too) for a long time before the courtly old gentleman remembered to offer him a chair. For a long period the reading went on, varied by correlative passages in other parts of the sacred writ, which this erudite parent found by means of a concordance.

Badger loved the Scriptures, but he felt that this was rather more than he needed at one instalment. He did not like to ask for egress from the room, and indeed somehow had a faint suspicion that the old gentleman had covertly noticed his flirting the evening before, and decided that he, as well

as the young lady, would be none the worse for some Biblical instruction. At any rate, they both received it; and it was not until a gleam of daylight removed all danger of jail-breaking that he rose, unlocked the door, bade Badger a courteous and his daughter an affectionate "Good-morning, dears," and went out to discharge from duty the horses that had been waiting so long for events that never came.

During the reading of the Holy Word poor Badger tried his best to keep eyes off the beautiful prisoner in the corner, but she fascinated them there continually. Her tongue had no need to speak to him; her glances were orators. They kept saying such things as these, and he, poor fellow, understood them only too well:

"Oh, you would do anything in the world for me, wouldn't you? I was to know whenever you could help me, even at the risk of your life. Yes?

"Brave, gallant young man! A true knight of chivalry!

"If I had wanted to elope with *you*, now,

you wouldn't have informed my father, after having consented to the plan, would you? And then you would no doubt have sneaked off and deserted me afterwards.

"So glad you came along. You have helped me *so* much.

"Congratulations to the young lady *you* are engaged to. I had rather have Hughie's little finger, in jail, than your whole body, brain, and soul, all at large."

She also quite often wiped her lips vigorously with a dainty handkerchief, and Badger understood that too. She was trying to brush away the memory of that kiss of gratitude she had given him.

When our young hero, feeling very little like a hero, was finally released from the room, he went, with true athletic agility, to his own, and made hasty preparations for leaving the house. But just as he was at the head of the staircase the thought struck him: Why? He had done nothing wrong; was in a true position; although deeply and thoroughly mortified and humiliated as he never had been before, he was conscious of

no ill-doing. "I will stay and see it out," decided he. And he flung himself on the bed, and slept until called to breakfast.

III

Apparently nobody but the three most interested knew of the events of the evening before. All seemed as bright, jolly, and cordial as ever; and the family smiled on their attractive young guest who had made the preceding evening so interesting to them. "How little one-half a house knows what the other two-thirds is doing!" parodied Badger to himself. Even his fair and winsome fellow-actor in the comedy of the still small hours came in, a little late, said "Good-morning" as if nothing had happened, and was in the cozy sitting-room with the others when the old gentleman conducted the family devotions preliminary to breakfast.

The chapter seemed very long to Badger, as he had had a great deal of the same kind of pabulum so short a time before; and when

asked to "join us in prayer," he did not feel up to himself in petitionary eloquence. He was rather noted among his associates as very efficient in invocation; but this time he felt considerably like a failure, and that he made the safe port of the "Amen" with the mere wreck of a prayer in tow.

Just as the services closed, and the family rose from their knees to their feet, the sound of a wagon at the gate was heard. Voltaire was soon off the door-step into the yard, baying and yelling, snarling and howling, all in the same monologue. The people from the wagon had fairly to fight their way to the door.

A sturdy, prosaic-looking man at last entered, who was greeted calmly by the courteous old gentleman as "Sheriff Davidson." He had with him a very meek, inoffensive-looking young man, who seemed about as much like a robber as a plate of unbaked doughnuts would.

As they entered, the young lady with whom Badger had had his experience of the night before gave a pathetic little screech,

and flung herself all over the young fellow, and never ceased kissing him till she had him on the sofa with her, sitting arm-in-arm.

"You see, sir," said Sheriff Davidson, addressing the head of the family glibly but awkwardly, "this is a dumbed queer an' inconsistent case. This 'ere young feller has been in jail two months for stealin' goods that another feller took, an' that he didn't know nothin' about till they was found—the goods in his room in his cousin's house an' the horse in the woods back of his great-uncle's farm. It was first-class proof, as circumstantial evidence goes, and he was on his way to state-prison to-morrow as sure as cud be. Guilty as a dog, if *ever* a feller was guilty by circumstantial evidence. But last night, about one o'clock in the mornin', some fellers tried to break jail an' git out. One on 'em was shot, an' they all was bagged ag'in. The jay that was clipped thought he was goin' to die, an' the doctor thought so too awhile, just to see if he wouldn't confess somethin'. He was a superstitious, senti-

mental sort o' feller, and insisted on recountin' of his whole life—a darned mean life it was too. Among other things, he gave us sure clews, so's we've found out that this young feller was as innocent of ever tryin' to do anything ag'in the law as that young lady there a-settin' amongst him. It's all been put up on him, an' very ingenious, too. He's goin' to be let out on his own responsibility after breakfast, an' will be set free reg'lar in a few days. I tried to git him to keep quiet, but he said no, he must give you folks down here the information that he wasn't a thief before he slep' or e't, an' so I came out with him this early, provid'n' he won't sue nobody for false imprisonment or anything connected with the mistake."

It was certainly a very extraordinary affair, Badger thought, as he abstracted his roll of maps from the improvised store-room of the covered bridge, and started off again to increase the geographical knowledge of the rural districts.

The young fellow had suffered so keenly

and so unjustly that the heart of the sympathetic family had melted toward him; even Voltaire had consented to take his case under canine consideration, study it carefully, report later, and meanwhile contemplate him in cheerful and inoffensive silence. Consent had been obtained to a marriage in the family at the ensuing Christmas, or thereabouts; and Badger had been invited to be the best man, and bring his best girl from Wilmington, Delaware. The young lady had behaved very well in the midst of her unexpected proud triumph, and had only said, as she bade her midnight fellow-conspirator a warm, cordial good-bye, with not half so much regret in it, though, as he could have liked:

"You see, I was right; poor Hughie is a good, true-hearted boy, as well as the most lovable one in the world; he wouldn't steal any sooner than you or I would. And you were right, too; for if we'd tried to help him out, we might have been discovered the same as the counterfeiters were, as we should have been there about the same

time; might have got mixed up with the gang, in fact, and been arrested for breaking jail. Good-bye, be sure and come at Christmas."

And Badger muttered, as he started for the next house, with the usual, every-day hope that geographical knowledge might be in demand there, "*Maybe* I will."

OLDBOTTLE'S BURGLARS

OLDBOTTLE'S BURGLARS

I

Ah me! Broadway is not at all the same piece of real estate that it was twenty years ago! If any one wants to dream over landmarks and cherish memories of locality, he must take a country village for it. There, may still be found the long, somnolent street where he disturbed the configuration of the earth by fashioning dust-hills, and upon which he cooked mud-pies in the great bakery of the sunshine. There, he can almost imagine himself stepping upon the very same material, ready to be used over again by his children or grandchildren.

Many of the landmarks are still present: the deacon's brick residence, the Congregational church, the Methodist parsonage, and

the water-power grist-mill—these are pretty nearly the same; even the school-house may have withstood a few generations of destructive boys and remain almost identical, with the substitution of new seats and desks; and like as not there are still several hangers-on of old inhabitants.

So, really, your sleepy old village is, in itself, more enduring than your wide-awake, thrifty city. The grand pathway among palaces called Broadway is never the same two years in succession; they stab it, dig it, undermine it, repave it, trade away the buildings along its borders for larger ones, and despatch its inhabitants to the graveyard while attracting others. They do everything possible to keep that renowned street a constantly shifting spectre, instead of a reliable creature of permanent form and substance.

I am now a well-to-do attorney in one of its marble mountains of offices, and live in a four-story brown-stone front some miles away; but every time I go up-town for any distance, queer little feelings of homesickness

come over me, with a yearning for the jolly and heaven-like boarding-house where I lived, with a dozen struggling fellow-law-students, thirty years ago, right on one side of Broadway, and not so very far up-town.

We were all poor enough to have gone into the almshouse with perfect propriety, so far as inert riches were concerned; but we still felt capable of working ourselves farther and farther away from it, until the distance should form a gulf. Penury is not so very hard a bed to lie upon when upholstered in youth and good health. Besides, each of us was possessed of a great treasure in an imaginary picture-album. This was called The Future, and in it different portions of the world were depicted as merely a background for Ourselves in various attitudes of wealth, honor, and power.

Good Mrs. Boscobel, the boarding-house keeper, was very different from some people I have known, whose excellence makes a short and permanent stop at goodness; she was "smart" at the same time; had a perfectly harmless tact, whose machinery was in-

visible; and made every one of her boarders feel that he had exclusive hold on some particular department of her heart. She liked this man for one quality, and adored that one for another; and even those who were lacking in all pretensions to winsomeness she could coat over with heart-secretions of pity and sympathy that ought to have made pearls of them. Good, motherly, everlastingly sensible Mrs. Boscobel! With what a son-like feeling we all adored her! and such of us as are still living do now—although she has many years been gathered to her mothers. I will go security that whatever of the many mansions she now inhabits is the happier and cozier for her presence!

We all felt that Nature would have been a consummate fraud not to produce at least one copy of such a woman; it promised to exist in the person of Priscilla Boscobel, whom we all joined in calling "Pris." She was seventeen years old, and had all her mother's kindness, without being quite so shrewd. We called her something of a flirt, but one who seemed so in spite of herself;

and nobody knew exactly how to blame her, even if ten or fifteen fellows *were* in love with her at the same time.

But the fact of her intense popularity did not brew bad blood among the various indirect petitioners for her favor; it somehow contributed to draw them nearer together; and a more harmonious lot of spoons never inhabited the same house until David Oldbottle entered the list of boarders and wooers almost on the same day.

The new arrival was fully six feet high, weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, and bore with him a dispute-me-and-I'll-spoil-your-face air, which was rather dispiriting to a lot of comparative light-weights. He bullied us all to some extent, but the worst weight of his insolence fell upon the head of "Little Doughnuts," as we playfully called one of our number (since his name was Dounot, and he was only five feet three in height and weighed only ninety pounds. A goodly portion of this must have been brain, for little Dounot has now hypnotized more juries and written the golden word Success across a greater num-

ber of briefs than all the rest of us put together.

Another fact that went toward making Oldbottle unpopular at our table was that he seemed to have captured "Pris" almost at the very start. He broke what might be called the balance of power among us; she talked three times as much with him as with any of the others, went out with him whenever he asked her, and showed in many other ways that she was fast becoming Oldbottle's own.

We wondered a great deal among ourselves how this could have happened; but Little Doughnuts, always the most astute, had no doubt as to the cause. "He's big and showy, and knows how to cover the blankness of his mental walls with the banner of verbal assertion," groaned the diminutive young man, who really thought a great deal of the landlady's daughter. "Some day she'll see what an absurd mistake she's making; whether before or after marriage I don't know."

As Oldbottle achieved greater and greater

success with Miss Boscobel (so we now constrainedly began to call her) he grew more and more domineering at our table. He assumed now and then a proprietary air regarding the whole place. He began practising little physical pleasantries on Doughnuts, which, although ostensibly in sport, carried with them an undercurrent of earnestness and reality. He would chuck him playfully under the chin, as one might a growing child; take him by the collar, and command and assist him to "cut a pigeon-wing," call him "hush-a-by-baby," drawing him on his knee before he could get away, and going through motions as if rocking him, etc., etc., while "Pris" would titter — at least, out of her eyes. These diminutive insults did not cease until Doughnuts one evening quietly but energetically flung an old-fashioned caster at the bully's head, missing it by only the eighth of an inch.

"If this thing had gone where it started for, you would have been well seasoned," the physically small young man remarked, coolly, to the surprised and alarmed giant; while

"Pris" rushed to her room, Mrs. Boscobel patiently gathered up various appetizers, and the rest of the table cheered with hearts and hands. "Give me another bit of your impudence and I'll send every dish I can get to you. I'll pay for a new caster of the same pattern, or any other you wish, dear Mrs. Boscobel." (He didn't have to; we all subscribed for another one; Oldbottle, I am bound to say, standing in for his share.)

This little volley of sauces produced a change in the giant's manner, but not in his soul. He made "Pris" believe that he had escaped sudden death by the fraction of a hair, and she pitied and petted him upon that basis. She became cold to the rest of us, would hardly speak to Little Doughnuts, and was not over-civil to any one except her mother and Oldbottle.

Good Mrs. Boscobel did everything she could to reconcile the opposing forces, made little parties after dinner, and invited us all to "show off," each in his particular sphere, laughed at the episode of the caster, said "boys will be boys," and privately thanked

Little Doughnuts for varying the monotony of her boarding-house and helping her to an improved caster. So great was her power of inoffensive management, and so intense her unaffected kindness, that she soon had us all tolerably happy again; even Dounot and Oldbottle got on speaking terms once more, although, evidently, nothing would soon make them into a Damon and Pythias.

Oldbottle now left his former victim entirely alone, and began to tease and bully the next smallest man. It was also evident that nobody ever called our lightest weight "Little Doughnuts" again; we spoke to and of him as "Mr. Dounot."

One evening at dinner we all got to talking about burglars, in consequence of some very clever transfers of property that had recently been accomplished not very far from us.

"A burglar, boys," preached Oldbottle, patronizingly, "is a rat, and not a tiger; a mechanic, and not a warrior. He does not wish to fight; he calls on you just to steal a part of what you have and get safely away. Of course he will strike, if too closely

cornered, and so will the most peaceable house-cat. But as for *my* being *afraid* of one —bah!" And he snapped his fingers contemptuously. "Just hide your money and jewels where they can't find 'em, and go to sleep; and then, if one of them happens to wake you up, tell him to 'get,' or you'll throw the boot-jack at him. See?"

"But suppose, Mr. Oldbottle," inquired "Pris," who was looking at him with eyes full of admiration for his theoretical courage and prowess—"suppose they should be fierce, bitter, bloody, murderous fellows; should wake you up and compel you to show where the money was hidden?"

"Do you see that fist?" inquired Oldbottle, with a sort of gentle fierceness. "It would take Burglar Number One promptly between the two eyes. Do you see that one?" (holding up the other). "It would take Burglar Number Two in the neck. Down they go, and out they go as soon as they can scramble to their feet; unless, indeed, I choose to—ah—capture them;" and his voice took a slightly yawning tone.

It is only justice to Oldbottle to say that we were all equally brave as to burglars—before the burglars came. We would do this, we would do that; we would shoot them, we would lasso them, we would stab them, we would throw a caster at them — somebody said, slyly, glancing at Dounot. Oh, we were a brave set of fellows—at dinner! But how little one knows what he will do under any unusual and unexpected set of circumstances! That very night the burglars came; and we were obliged to believe that there was some advantage in having a large man in the house, even if he *was* self-assertive.

It was lucky that Mrs. Boscobel and her daughter had gone away from home for the night, attending the marriage of some relative in another part of the city; for I do not know who of our doughty crew would have lifted a hand against the encroachers. I was also away—"sitting up" with a sick cousin. But it appears that as soon as it was known that they were in the house nearly all the hall-room doors were locked

and barricaded; everybody seemed intent on guarding himself and his own. A precious set of young cowards, one might call them!

All excepting Oldbottle. They got into his room before he was fairly awake, and three of them stood looking down on him through the cavernous false eyes in their masks.

II

"How did you feel when you first saw them?" asked good Mrs. Boscobel the next evening at dinner, as we were all gazing at the stalwart individual who alone had encountered the burglars.

"A great deal as I always thought I should in such a case," replied the giant, looking thoughtfully around upon us. "My first idea was, 'How fortunate that the ladies are out of the house! They might have been terribly frightened.'"

"Generous, brave heart!" looked "Pris" from admiring eyes.

"Were they armed?" inquired Mrs. Boscobel.

"Two of them had revolvers and one a bowie-knife," replied Oldbottle.

Danger revolutionizes one's feelings quickly, sometimes. Much as I had hated this giant of a fellow, I could not help admiring the grit of a man who could speak so quietly of three burglars whom he had suddenly seen in the night.

"Mercy!" ejaculated "Pris," turning very pale, and looking at him as if she would like to eat him, if by some process without pain to the viands. "How frightened you must have been!"

"Only a little startled, at first," replied Oldbottle, still more quietly. "I am a heavyweight, and knew I was enough for the three of them—if they had only been unarmed. I knew, too, that they would not hurt me unless they were obliged to in order to defend themselves. I reflected in a moment that the best thing to do was to gain time and get them off their guard. So I looked up, as I lay there in my study-

gown — I had not yet disrobed — and smiled."

"Smiled!" exclaimed Mr. Dounot. "Smiled!" ejaculated two or three of the others.

"Smiled," repeated Oldbottle, smiling; "that was the word, I believe. And I am tempted to do so now, when reflecting on the conduct of some in this house, who, instead of rushing out and helping me, locked and bolted their doors, and left me to cope with the burglars alone."

"Can a fellow get up in his sleep and fight burglars?" asked one of the students, rather weakly, and, I thought, sheepishly.

"You were not asleep," replied Oldbottle, quietly, but firmly. "I have reason to believe that every one in the house was awake —and that each one took splendid care of *himself*. But I am blaming nobody; perhaps you all had good reason for wanting to see me robbed."

"Goodness! why should any one want *you* robbed, Mr. Oldbottle?" exclaimed good Mrs. Boscobel.

"I have not been popular here, I know,"

replied Oldbottle, in a feeling tone that made me begin to positively like him. "I am large and strong, and my ways are necessarily those of a large and strong man. I have had difficulties in this house because I was misunderstood. Perhaps I am not worthy to be friends with you, boys, but I *was* good enough to keep those three burglars from breaking in and entering *your* rooms as well as mine."

I felt almost like going around the table, taking Oldbottle's hand, and apologizing for any hard remarks that I might have made concerning him theretofore. He continued, in a very strong, but low and almost musical voice:

"One of the burglars spoke in a half-whisper, and said, 'You're a cheerful bird, young feller, to smile at the very beginnin' of a surprise picnic like this. Raise yer hands, or we'll cross 'em on top of your dead body.'" "Pris" was bending over toward him, frail slip of a thing, as if to shield him.

"Well, I kept my hands where they were, and told them to shoot and be hanged; they

were angry, but after searching the room they all pointed their revolvers at me again. They had searched through, under, and around the bed for my valuables. I had hidden them; not much of a task, for a poor student like me, to conceal what financial treasures he has," and his voice took another touch of feeling. I liked Oldbottle still better; I could not help it.

"'Show us where you've put your watch an' chain an' your money, pr'ty middlin' quick,' hoarsely whispered one of the men. 'An' where the old lady keeps her silver an' her sparklers.' I beg your pardon, Mrs. Boscobel, but 'old lady' were the disrespectful words he used."

"Never mind," replied Mrs. Boscobel, "he didn't get them, thanks to you, Mr. Oldbottle. But go on."

"I now began to coolly consider a question in ethics. Is it ever correct, when one's life and property, and the lives and property of others, are at stake, to—to romance—to tell a falsehood?"

Here quite a little debate ensued, Dounot

taking the negative of the question, and holding it with a great deal of ability. But the majority decided against him, and Oldbottle continued.

"'What money I have, gentlemen,' I replied, 'is in a safe in a little room at the end of the hall. I will go with you and show you everything.' So we went into the hall, they still guarding me carefully. But just as we were at the head of the stairs I pretended to peer down over them, and said, in a mysterious half-whisper, like this, 'Is that one of your men, or not, at the foot of the flight?' For one second they all stretched their necks and tried to see who it was; they were off their guard. See that fist? As quick as a flash I knocked them one after the other down the whole flight. Before they had time to rise and shoot at me I was hurling chairs, Indian clubs, a light-stand, and whatever I could find at them, and shouting, 'Here they are, boys; come on!' They were glad enough to scramble out from under the débris and run for it. I chased them two blocks after they got into the

street, and yelled 'Police!' but of course there was no watchman within sight or hearing. Still, I had time to get a good idea of them, as far as one could by studying their forms and voices, and shall know them when I see them again."

"You are a brave man, Mr. Oldbottle," exclaimed "Pris," suddenly, looking at him with intense admiration; and a short silence ensued, in which the hero of the day bore his honors very quietly and modestly.

The next evening the conversation bore again upon Oldbottle's burglars; and the next, and the next. It became quite the thing to get him to entertain us with his account, which grew more and more graphic; several friends were called in to "assist" in hearing it.

Oldbottle bore his honors very modestly; though, of course, being human, he could not help telling the story better and better every time. To my surprise, none of his former enemies tried to "take him off" or "call him down," as they had often done on much smaller matters; everybody joined in

praising him. "Such," I reflected, "is the power of true courage in transforming foemen into friends."

Little Dounot was perhaps the most manly of all in expressing his affection. "We feel so much safer with you in the house, Mr. Oldbottle," he would say. "I will admit that I have not always understood you; but your story, as you tell it, gives me such a clear and vivid glimpse of your courage that small matters are obliterated. I am almost sorry I threw the caster at you."

And then Oldbottle would hold his hand across the table (which Dounot could never make quite long enough an arm to reach) and say, "Never mind, old fellow; I was sure you would like me when you knew me. We needn't fall out again."

"I'm certain *I* wouldn't want to fall out with a man who could knock three burglars down-stairs hand running," Robertson would say. And good Mrs. Boscobel would join in, and the visitors at the table would applaud, and "Pris" would look a dozen eyes full of admiration.

Sometimes a whole party of students and others would come in of an evening and listen to Oldbottle's account of his adventure with the burglars. It seemed particularly useful, as house-breakers were affecting our neighborhood that month, and it was considered as peculiarly desirable to hear as many bits of personal experience upon the subject as possible, especially cases in which the burglar was circumvented by the burgher. We at last elevated Oldbottle on a little pedestal at the end of the parlor, where he would go through the account modestly but fluently, while the rest of us listened, and cheered at the different points in the narration, which, although never varying as to details, grew at last to be very well told. There never seemed to have been a greater change in the sentiment of a lot of students.

It is singular how one thing leads to another; evolution seems everywhere. Oldbottle's account was so graphic and life-like that somebody suggested that he ought to be a popular lecturer upon the subject, "How to Deal with Burglars." We actually

gathered a very neat little audience one evening in Mrs. Boscobel's parlors, at twenty-five cents per head, for the benefit of the indigent-police movement. A well-known juror, who lived next door, introduced our new candidate for forensic honors to the audience; and a police inspector, who was present in citizen's dress, remarked, in a stage whisper, that he'd like to have that feller on the force.

III

This was the most brilliant evening of all. Never had Oldbottle told his story better; never had he received so much applause; never had "Pris" looked at him with such admiring eyes. The lecture (or "lecturette," as he modestly called it) was prefaced by a short and interesting account of burglars, past and present. The subject was beautifully handled. After the exercise was over, a celebrated lyceum-bureau manager who was present thought he could make a hundred engagements for our hero at fifty dol-

lars each, provided he would pay him in advance five hundred dollars commission and a hundred dollars toward advertising. A vote of thanks was given the young hero-student, and several short speeches were made.

When Dounot was called on for a speech, he rose, smiled, praised the wording and subject-matter of the address, and then said, smoothly and blandly: "Might I ask you two or three questions, Mr. Oldbottle?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Oldbottle, politely.

At this Dounot began one of those quiet, genial, sympathetic cross-examinations which have hundreds of times since made him, to an opposite, apprehensive case, what one witness described as "a holy, smiling terror." In a few minutes he had Oldbottle stammering, blushing, explaining, and re-explaining, mending the roads of his assertions, and tumbling over himself generally; while Dounot, with every apparent disposition in the world to help him out, conducted him further and further into the valley of falsehood and prevarication. It was one of the

lightning strokes of that bank of genius with which Dounot has since brought down a colossal fortune and lifted a splendid renown. He made Oldbottle feel that he was his friend in the conversation, and that they were walking hand-in-hand; but within five minutes he had it perfectly plain to everybody, even "Pris," that the big giant had been making himself the hero of a romance. Having led him at length to the very head of the stairway of convicted dissimulation, he smilingly proceeded to hurl him off. "Oldbottle," said he, quietly and unassumingly, "I believe you are the greatest liar this earth has known since Ananias retired from business."

"What do you mean, sir?" shouted the giant.

"I mean Ananias," replied Dounot, placidly, putting his hands in his pockets and advancing a step toward the burglar-demolisher. "Ananias — he was a Bible character, but a very bad one. Oldbottle, let *me* tell the story now, just as it happened. You lay, not in your 'dressing-gown' (for I